PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING IN TWO AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in part or in full, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signed 

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABA	Applied Behaviour Analysis
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CALD	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
CSR	Comprehensive School Reform
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
DET	Department of Training
DoE	Department of Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NSW	New South Wales
P&C	Parents and Citizens [association]
PBIS	Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support
PBL	Positive Behaviour for Learning
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support
STIPI	Schools to Improve Parent Involvement
SWPBS	School-wide Positive Behaviour Support
WSR	Western Sydney Region

ABSTRACT

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a proactive and preventative approach for teaching appropriate behaviour in the school setting to promote positive academic and social performance. The PBL approach is based on the Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS) model from the United States of America (www.pbis.org) and in 2005 was initially introduced to schools in the geographical region of South Western Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. This study investigated parent involvement in PBL in two primary schools in South Western Sydney.

Research across many decades has demonstrated that parents have a significant influence on the behaviour, academic performance and school attendance levels of their children (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2013; Bowlby, 1951; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Christenson & Hurley, 1997; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Monti, Pomerantz & Roisman, 2014; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). Accordingly, the NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE) policies (NSW DET, 1996, 2006(a); NSW Education Act, 1990) and PBL literature (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) all emphasise the importance of parents, as partners with teachers, in the shared responsibility of educating children.

There is a deficiency of implementation guidelines, aligned to Department policies and PBL literature that promote parent involvement in schools. Furthermore, such guidelines may not provide the necessary flexibility to support parent involvement across all schools due to the variability of school systems and contexts. Therefore, the implementation of PBL into Australian schools in the twenty-first century to promote the positive social and academic performance of students, and the knowledge that parents are a significant influence on student performance, it is critical to investigate the role of parents in PBL. Parent participation in PBL could be a factor that contributes to the fidelity of PBL processes and the overall sustainability of the positive behaviour systems. To date, there is a lack of Australian studies that have investigated parent involvement in PBL. Consequently, this study will

contribute to Australian and international knowledge about parent involvement in PBL and, more widely, within schools.

This study employed a qualitative methodology. The participants were teachers, parents and students from two South Western Sydney primary schools. The students were interviewed in focus group discussions, while the teachers and parents were interviewed according to their preference for an individual or group discussion. A semi-structured interview and the researcher's reflective listening technique enabled participants to elaborate on particular themes which provided an in-depth understanding of parent involvement in PBL and more widely within the schools.

Findings of the analysis showed that teachers believed parents had been involved in PBL implementation, however, the data showed that parents had gained knowledge about PBL vicariously through their children and not as a result of being involved in PBL implementation processes. The nature and extent of parent involvement were further explored more broadly within the two schools. Barriers to parent involvement and stakeholder perspectives to promote and improve parent involvement in general were identified.

Literature and educational policy recognise the importance of a shared responsibility between parents and teachers for the positive social and academic performance of children. However, there is a gap between policy intent with regard to parent involvement and the practical applications that would enable schools to maintain continued parent involvement across varying and complex school contexts. The findings support the view that further research is needed to build and sustain the involvement of parents in the education of their children, and align with the NSW DoE policies, PBL and education research literature. As an outcome of the current study, a new model is proposed for schools to improve parent involvement (STIPI) in PBL and in schools more widely, a new way of working with and involving parents in educational contexts. While it was not within the scope of this study to test the model, future research may find that improved parent involvement in PBL and more widely within schools has the potential to further enhance student social and academic outcomes and further support the sustainability of PBL in schools.

CHAPTER 1

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL: AFFILIATED OR ALIENATED?

> Achieving breakthrough outcomes for children…requires that we support the adults who care for them (Shonkoff, 2017, p. 15).

Introduction

As a society, we appraise parents according to the merits of their children. If a young person excels in the arts, sport or school, the parents are often depicted as influencing and supporting their choices. Likewise, if a young person's behaviour is problematic, the parents are considered to have had some influence on that behaviour. Regardless of whether a child succeeds in school or struggles to achieve social or academic competency, parents report that raising a child is demanding and challenging. The expectation is, however, that parents will triumph over their child's transgressions and parents are seen by society as inept if they do not.

When a child begins school the ongoing responsibility for the social and academic welfare of the child is shifted to include teachers. New South Wales Department of Education (NSW DoE)[1] policies (NSW DET, 1996, 2006(a); NSW Education Act, 1990) and Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) literature (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) emphasise that educating a child is the shared responsibility of teachers and parents. While schools accept the mandate of a shared responsibility with parents, tradition and tokenism (Khanal, 2013; Woodrow, Somerville, Naidoo & Power, 2016) often set the agenda for parent involvement, with limited support provided to schools by way of procedural guidelines and practical strategies. Parents, when enrolling their child in school, often engage with an environment very different from their own school experience. Thus, after the initial orientation period during which they are informed of the expectations of the

[1] Formerly the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET)

school, without support and encouragement to become involved in activities and committees they are likely to withdraw from proactive engagement with the school. This does not mean that parents have less influence over their children, rather that they entrust, in part, the ongoing social and academic skill development of their children, to the teachers.

When the social and academic skill development of children is discussed in the context of learning behaviour, it may be expected that emotional learning will also be addressed. According to Cook et al., (2015) the preventative learning that is undertaken as part of the Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS) framework, on which the Australian model PBL is based, is separate from the social/emotional learning programs which may be introduced concurrently with the PBIS universal prevention approach to positive behaviour building in schools. Wilson and Lipsey (2007) in their research into the effectiveness of social/emotional programs that addressed mental health and aggressive behaviour stated that such programs were not widely adopted by schools, or, if they were, they were not implemented with the recommended fidelity. Therefore, while particular interventions may address social/emotional learning, such learning is not the primary function of the PBL school-wide universal prevention approach in Australian schools.

To support the ongoing development of students' social and academic skills, the NSW DoE introduced PBL to emphasise "positive learning outcomes as a result of positive behaviour enhancement" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. iii). The PBL tiered framework provides a systemic approach for schools to address academic and social behaviour based on individual school data. These data may consist of recurring behaviours in a particular area of the school or the number of incidents and suspensions recorded for an individual student or for all students across the school. According to the PBL website (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au), when PBL is implemented well:

- students are taught acceptable behaviour;
- staff respond positively to positive social and academic behaviour; and
- parents, family and community are more involved in their school.

In recognition of the important role parents play in the development of their children, PBL literature (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) suggests that parents and teachers engage in decision-making processes together. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the scope of parent involvement in PBL, and to gain understanding and knowledge about school practices to involve parents, and how then to build and maintain best practice in sharing the educative responsibility with parents.

Inspiration and Background

Research across many decades highlights that parents have significant influence on the social and academic performance of their children (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2013; Bowlby, 1951; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Christenson & Hurley, 1997; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Monti, Pomerantz & Roisman, 2014; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). In acknowledgement of this parental influence, the NSW Education Act, 1990 mandates parent involvement in school decision-making processes. More recently, the state-wide PBL approach (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) recommends that school personnel encourage parents be included on school decision-making teams. Thus, the DoE and PBL sources emphasise the importance of parents as partners with teachers in educating their children.

When the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2003) reported that the gap was widening when it comes to successful schooling outcomes between the most advantaged and disadvantaged students in Australia, the NSW DoE considered ways to reduce disadvantage and increase academic success with renewed enthusiasm. To facilitate positive behaviours that contribute to successful learning, the NSW DoE formed a leadership team to examine the Positive Behavioral[2] Intervention and Support (PBIS) model from the United States of America. In 2005, this leadership team renamed PBIS to "Positive Behaviour for Learning" (PBL) to "reflect the regional priority on improving student outcomes" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 2). Positive Behaviour for Learning was

[2] American spelling "behavior"; Australian spelling "behaviour".

subsequently introduced to schools in the geographical location of South Western Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Positive Behaviour for Learning, like PBIS, is a proactive and preventative approach for teaching appropriate behaviour in the school setting to promote positive academic and social performance (Dunlap, Sailor, Horner & Sugai, 2009) which in turn leads to more positive outcomes for students (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Roffey, 2004; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). As the social and academic performance of students is significantly influenced by their parents, and PBL was introduced into schools to teach appropriate academic and social behaviours, this research study will investigate the involvement of parents in the decision-making processes to implement the universal strategies of the PBL system.

I have interacted with parents as a teacher, a behaviour consultant and a PBL coach with the NSW DoE. Paramount within each of these roles is engaging students with meaningful curricula which will lead to successful academic and social outcomes. Some years ago, while in the role of PBL coach with the DoE, a mother expressed her thoughts about teaching her child appropriate behaviour at home and at school. She wanted the best outcomes for her child and to achieve this she believed in discipline at school, at home and in the community. “Well parents are the child’s first teachers, aren’t they?” she exclaimed, and her expectation was that the school would continue to nurture in her child the positive attitudes toward responsible behaviour and lifelong learning that had begun at home. This mother was explaining to me how the PBL rules reinforced her family’s values to be respectful to others, to stay safe in all environments and to understand how to become a lifelong learner.

The positivity with which this mother spoke about school rules was a welcome disclosure given my reflection on a ten year period of working as a behaviour consultant with students with significant disruptive behaviours, their teachers and parents. In that role, I met parents who were upset or angry, more often than not saying that the only time they heard from the school was when their child was in trouble. In my experience, the parents of students with problematic behaviour rarely visit the school except when summoned, rarely wanted to discuss the problem,

and sometimes engaged in a confrontational manner with teachers, even though both the teachers and the parents wanted the best outcomes for the child.

As a reflective practitioner, I considered successful child outcomes from the perspectives of both the mother of the student with problematic behaviour, and the mother who supported the school discipline policy. Upon reflection I queried: If parent involvement makes a significant difference to child outcomes, what would this look like in a school? And: What would parent involvement look like during PBL implementation? These queries motivated me to investigate parent involvement in PBL through the perspectives of teachers, parents and students in a research project. This coincided with the DoE scaling up the implementing PBL to increase the successful academic and social outcomes of students.

As a trained PBL coach, I supported a number of primary schools across South Western Sydney with the implementation of PBL universal school-wide systems and strategies. Initial research suggests that PBL has had a positive influence on the teaching and learning in Sydney schools (Mooney et al., 2008; Yeung et al., 2009). Prior to accepting this coaching role, I had taught in a variety of settings such as; early childhood settings, all grades across primary school (Kindergarten to Year six), in special education settings and in an early learning program at an independent therapy centre for children with disabilities. Coupled with my knowledge of PBL, I have therefore brought to this study an understanding of child development, the ability to teach appropriate age/stage-based curriculum, and experience in planning physical, academic and social experiences with parents to support children and families moving toward positive and successful life outcomes. In addition, I believe that collaboration between teachers and parents strengthens the commitment to learning for all the stakeholders. It is with this background and motivation that I undertook this study to investigate parent involvement in PBL implementation.

Parents' involvement in the education of their children is complex and not restricted to a physical presence at school. The NSW Education Act, 1990, the "Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy" (NSW DET, 2006a) and the "Student Welfare Policy" (NSW DET, 1996) refer to *engagement, partnership, collaboration* and *participation* as well as *involvement* to reflect the reciprocal

relationship between school personnel and parents. Thus, throughout this thesis the term "involvement" captures the meaning of the reciprocal relationship between teachers and parents, and is intended to link these relationships to enhance the social and academic outcomes for students in primary schools.

Reasons for Researching Parent Involvement in School

The NSW Education Act, 1990 and policies of the NSW DoE (NSW DET 2006a; NSW DET, 1996) also include statements that refer to a shared responsibility for the education of children and that parents should be involved in school decision-making processes, with the expectation that parents will support departmental policies. Positive Behaviour for Learning literature (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) emphasises parents be nominated as members of the school's PBL leadership team. The NSW DoE acknowledges that to educate a child is the shared responsibility of parents and teachers, and to affirm policy DoE schools have a duty under the NSW Education Act, 1990 to provide opportunities for parents to be involved in school and the education of their children.

Not only does the literature identify that parents are a significant influence in the lives of their children (Brotman et al., 2011; Coleman, 2013; Letourneau, Drummond, Kysela, McDonald & Stewart, 2001; Yoshikawa, 1994) but attachment research (Bretherton, 1992; Jordan, 2014; Ranson & Urichuk, 2008) also reports that positive parent–child relationships are associated with higher self-esteem and school achievement. Furthermore, positive links exist between academic achievement, positive social interactions at school, and better life opportunities and outcomes for students with interested and involved parents (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2013; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Monti et al., 2014). A study by Monti et al., (2014) found that "the more involved parents were in children's education during elementary school, the better children's engagement, standardised test scores, and academic competencies at the end of elementary school (*ts* ≥_*2.12.ps* <_*.05*)" (p. 865). According to Henderson and Mapp (2002) "there is strong and steadily growing evidence that families can improve their children's academic performance in school and have a major influence on attendance and behavior" (p. 1).

Studies were found that showed successful parent involvement in areas of early childhood (Karakus & Savas, 2012; LaForett & Mendez, 2010); special education (Al-Shammari & Yawkey, 2008; Burke, 2013; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Sawyer, 2015); aboriginal education (Appleyard, 2002; Flückiger, Diamond & Jones, 2012); and juvenile justice settings (Burke, Mulvey, Schubert & Garbin, 2014; Garfinkel, 2010; Vidal & Woolard, 2016). To date in Australia there is a paucity of research into parent involvement in PBL processes. Therefore, the findings that come from this research will contribute to evidence that further supports the social and academic achievement of students as well as the long-term efficacy of PBL in schools.

Positive Behaviour for Learning is based on a whole school approach where teachers, students and parents work together to address discipline and welfare. While PBL school-wide processes have been quite successful in this endeavour, their emphasis is on student behaviour implementations for learning outcomes and teacher efficacy and well-being. Despite success for the majority of students, Mooney et al., (2008) assert that further research is needed to determine the effects of tier two and tier three strategies for students with greater needs, and the effects of PBL on all student learning.

According to Mooney et al., (2008) one of the NSW DoE's stated goals for adopting PBL is to "support community processes that foster the belief that educating our students is a shared responsibility" (p. 6) with parents. Although schools acknowledge this shared responsibility, Ingram, Wolfe and Lieberman (2007) while explicating the benefits of parent involvement with their children's education state that "most schools are unsure how to translate parent involvement into student achievement" (p. 480). This pioneering study will contribute to knowledge and understanding in this area.

As already discussed, parental engagement in their children's education and lives can improve social and learning outcomes (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2013; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Monti et al., 2014). However, a large body of research both nationally and internationally links poor academic performance and disruptive student behaviour to variables within and outside of the school context (Brotman et

al., 2011; Cooper & Cresnoe, 2007; Gilbert, Chessor, Perz & Ussher, 2010; Scott, White, Algozzine & Algozzine, 2009; Valdez, Carlson & Zanger, 2005; Yoshikawa, 1994). Such research exposes disruptive behaviour as a serious problem with serious consequences, not only for students but also for teachers and parents and for the building of social capital in this country. With the causes of disruptive student behaviour noted as complex (Brotman et al., 2011; Cooper & Cresnoe, 2007; Gilbert et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2009; Valdez et al., 2005) applying interventions such as PBL in the school setting to address behaviour, is worthy of research to support optimum outcomes for all students.

Clunies-Ross, Little and Kienhuis (2008) explain that in Australian schools, disruptive behaviour and teacher stress and burnout are major concerns, while Brotman et al., (2011) propose that parents also struggle with children's difficult behaviour and a lack of knowledge and strategies to deal with it. Research indicates that disruptive student behaviour is linked to a continuum of negative outcomes for young people, from poor academic achievement, delinquency and drug use through to criminal activity and incarceration (Bidell & Deacon, 2010; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt & Leaf, 2010). Positive Behaviour for Learning is seen to be a proactive, preventative approach for schools to teach appropriate behaviour, leading to less disruption and a greater focus on academic achievement. Collectively, teachers, parents and students experience the effects of their behaviour and interactions with one another. It is with this understanding that interventions which teach and encourage appropriate academic and social behaviour ought to involve all stakeholders to increase the opportunity for greater success.

As a preventative intervention, the PBL framework considers human and environmental factors to identify problem behaviours. Once identified, the behaviour can be effectively responded to with a continuum of support described as school-wide, small group or individual. The concept of these levels of support is to enable the involvement of a variety of teaching and community resources to assist students and families both with and without risk factors. A comprehensive description of this preventative framework is given in Chapter 3.

When difficult conversations arise with parents regarding the behaviour of a child, teacher-parent relationships can become strained. In my experience as a behaviour consultant working with disruptive students and frustrated teachers and parents, these two important advocates for the child sometimes accused each other of provoking the disagreeable behaviour. Teachers who identify children as having a learning or behaviour difficulty have a duty of care (www.dec.nsw.gov.au/detresources/Duty-of-care_aINKBMeyYD.pdf) to discuss such issues with parents. Parents may feel a sense of helplessness or blame for such issues, making any collaborative planning difficult and awkward (Bambara, Nonnemacher & Kern, 2009; Woodrow et al., 2016). However, collaborative planning is more effective if both the parent and the teacher contribute to the positive social and academic goals for the child. A supportive relationship between the parent and the teacher contributes to the effectiveness of co-planning practices.

Parent-teacher relationships require time to develop, as some may be difficult to establish and cultivate if parents' prior life and educational experiences have been fraught with difficulties, leaving them feeling incompetent in the school setting (Semke, Garbacz, Kwon, Sheridan & Woods, 2010; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). In addition, considering the cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) of many Australian schools (Retrieved August 6, 2017 from www.abs.gov.au), the parent–teacher relationship may become more difficult due to cultural and linguistic differences adding to the complexity of building relationships and involving parents in school. Having noted the important role of parents and teachers in encouraging the positive academic and social development of children, finding ways to nurture relationships with parents may help overcome the difficulties of past experiences or the impact of CALD to improve parent involvement in schools.

In NSW, children begin formal schooling in Kindergarten around the age of five years and progress through six years of primary school. High school begins in Year seven and is completed following Year twelve; in all, there are thirteen years of formal schooling. Hattie (2008) states that from the time a child is born until the end of their formal schooling, they will spend approximately 15,000 hours being influenced by those in the education system and 55,000 hours being influenced by parents, caregivers, peers and others in the community. Thus, children spend many

more hours in the company of family and out in the community than they do in the classroom. Hattie's observation indicates that for optimal learning and social development to occur for children, these hours of influence need to be considered collectively and not separately. In agreement, Brock and Edmunds (2010) state that "by the time the child enters school the home has already had an enormous influence on the child's education. Therefore, neither the school nor the home can operate separately: both bear responsibility for the child" (p. 55). Thus, to provide the best outcomes for children, research that investigates a shared responsibility for education across both the home and school contexts is worthwhile.

To teach positive behaviours that enable successful learning through a pedagogical framework, also requires an understanding of the social and cultural knowledge embedded in families, which cultivates self-concept and motivation for learning, and is integral to academic success and positive life outcomes for children (Ferguson, 2008; McInerney, 2008; Poza, Brooks & Valdés, 2014). If parents are isolated from this framework, and home and school are treated separately, interventions such as PBL will be less effective across the cumulative schooling years. Shonkoff (2017) explains that policymakers and practitioners support existing programs that improve life outcomes for children; however, the design of these programs does not accommodate the complexities that develop over time. Hence, he states, the effects of such programs have not increased substantially in fifty years. Moore (2015) points out that over the last fifty years Australia has experienced rapid social change. Given the changing face of Australian society and the fact that interventions need to reflect complexities that occur over time (Shonkoff, 2017) ongoing research into PBL and the efficacy of child and family interventions is warranted.

Moore (2015) suggests that interventions that deliver a variety of content, such as improving parenting abilities, parenting programs and social support, contribute to supporting children's learning. Given that parents and teachers are influential in shaping the academic and social outcomes of children, and that PBL is a system for schools to improve social and academic performance, it is both relevant and timely to investigate parent involvement in PBL implementation processes and

the implications of this, particularly as PBL is progressively introduced into an increasing number of schools across Australia.

The literature (Mooney et al., 2008; Yeung et al., 2009) informs that PBL is having a positive impact for the majority of staff and students in schools, and motivated me to investigate if parent involvement in PBL could further support the academic and social outcomes for all students, including those students with the greatest need. Furthermore, could parent involvement assist schools to support the whole family in an attempt to reduce negative outcomes by building stronger relationships between teachers, families and services in their local communities? As the literature (Brotman et al., 2011) states that both teachers and parents share the common goal of their students' and children's success, finding ways to improve parent involvement that lead to stronger relationships is a worthwhile goal. This study contributes significantly to a better understanding of parent involvement in PBL processes in Australian schools, supplementing studies in the United States.

Many researchers support the view that there is a need for effective multidisciplinary intervention approaches that not only facilitate positive academic behaviour but also address family concerns associated with opportunities to develop positive life pathways (Cholewa, Smith-Adcock & Amatea, 2010; Coleman, 2013; Kolbert, Schultz & Crothers, 2014; Vaughn, White, Johnston & Dunlap, 2005). As Vinson (2009) reflects, "because disadvantageous conditions are often bundled [together] efforts must be directed to loosening the systemic constraints on people's life opportunities if progress is to be achieved" (p. 3). This research study aims to contribute to understanding the shared responsibility of teachers and parents in educating children and continue the scholarly discussion about parent involvement in schools.

Structure of the Thesis

This chapter emphasised the importance of parents in the academic and social lives of their children, and highlighted the paucity of research into parent involvement in PBL and schools more widely. Furthermore, I presented my

background and the impetus for, and importance of, investigating the topic of parent involvement in realising the positive social and academic outcomes for students.

Chapter two will review the literature concerning the impact of disruptive behaviour on teachers, parents and students, and the relevant theoretical perspectives. Education policy will be reviewed in relation to parent involvement and the parent connection to the social and academic performance of their children. The international perspective on antisocial behaviour will be considered, together with literature examining multidisciplinary approaches to family interventions. Chapter three will review literature about the behaviour management of children from a historical perspective and the development of positive behaviour interventions. Literature regarding the significance of parent involvement in education and the lives of their children is acknowledged as critical to this investigation.

The aims of this study and the research questions will be presented in Chapter four. That will set the foundation for a discussion of the methodology in Chapter five, which details the plan to conduct this research project. Chapter six will describe the contexts of the two primary schools that agreed to participate in this study.

Chapter seven, the first of the two findings chapters, will present the perspectives of the teachers and parents on their understanding of PBL and the involvement of parents in the PBL implementation processes. Chapter eight will present the perceived barriers to parent involvement and the stakeholder perspectives to improve parent involvement in the participating schools.

The discussion in Chapter nine will detail the implications of the findings and proposes a new model to support schools to improve parent involvement. The conclusion (Chapter ten) will identify future research directions for parent involvement in PBL and more widely within schools.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR: THEORIES, COMPLEXITIES AND OUTCOMES

> Theories are meant to be united in practice…If learning is defined as a process that leads to a change in the learner's disposition and capabilities that can be reflected in behaviour, then learning theories are meant to guide one's learning…efforts must be made to understand learning theory fundamentals (Wang, 2012, p. 10).

Theoretical Perspectives

Historically, educational research has considered many theoretical perspectives in the quest to support better learning outcomes for children, as shown here. Social learning and behaviour theories provide, in part, relevant approaches to intervention. Behaviourist approaches date back to Pavlov (1928) with "conditioned responses" and Watson (1928) with "operant conditioning", both of whom both focused on the behaviour rather than the context in which it occurred or the thinking and reasoning behind it (Wang, 2012). Further to this, Skinner (1976) believed that behaviours could be extinguished or reinforced as a direct result of the consequences that followed.

This exploration of how humans learn and behave was expanded by Albert Bandura (2002) who examined learning across three stages: (a) by observation, the principal mode; (b) learning by imitating, if one liked what one saw; and, (c) making conscious cognitive decisions about what was observed or experienced. Thus, knowledge is constructed over time and builds on prior learning. Bandura (2002) positions people as "functioning in cultural embeddedness" (p. 270) and refers to this understanding as social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1978) "psychological functioning involves a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavioural, cognitive, and environmental influences" (p. 345). Furthermore, as Kaur (2010) explains, many variables influence how a child is socialised; the values and

beliefs of the parents, the cultural background, the peer group, education and the media. So we begin to see that behaviours, acceptable or not, have complex beginnings and are continually influenced by the journey of life. These influences might present themselves as either risk factors or protective factors and in turn affect the strategies we use to solve problems.

Numerous studies show that the formation of a secure attachment with caregivers is associated with higher rates of compliance with parents and general sociability (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Jordan, 2014; Velotti, Di Folco & Cesare Zavattini, 2013). This view is illustrated by the following quote:

> For example in the task of learning to resolve differences of opinion between parents and adolescents, teens with secure attachment strategies tend to engage in productive, problem solving discussions…in contrast, insecure teen-parent dyads are more likely to avoid problem solving, use pressuring tactics that undermine autonomy and have high levels of disengagement and dysfunctional anger (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999, p. 324).

Attachment theory is based on the principle that a young child needs to be near to someone who will meet their basic needs and model behaviours that provide protection and feelings of security (Ainsworth, 1979). This enables the child to explore their physical and social worlds, learning responses to the activity in each. Ainsworth (1979) suggests that the consistency with which a parent responds to their child lays the foundation for future behaviour. Therefore, the quality of that attachment is all-important for the development of positive self-esteem and is worthy of examination in more detail. Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) proclaim that "from its outset it [attachment theory] has been eclectic drawing on a number of scientific disciplines, including developmental, cognitive, social and personality psychology, social systems and various branches of biological science, including genetics" (p. 340). Attachment, as a mechanism to kindle feelings of warmth and affection, is influenced by both the idiosyncrasies of the child and the attachment figure. Patterns of behaviour for each are stimulated by the reactions of the other.

The developmental complications of the parent–child relationship alone could have significant bearing on many child outcomes. Though attachment style may be seen as a risk factor, it must be noted that it is only a single risk factor among many,

and does not in itself lead to negative outcomes (Allen & Land, 1999; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Velotti et al., 2013). As attachment theory is significant in child development, it is critical that parents in the primary attachment relationship, be included in the decision-making when planning interventions for children at school. In addition, it is acknowledged that provision of access to parental support to develop skills and understanding would assist in guiding their child toward more positive outcomes.

Complexities of Disruptive Behaviour

The causes and complexities of disruptive and antisocial behaviour are part of an intricate fabric woven from a genetic base, and intertwined with family, school and societal threads which make for a complicated pattern. In responding to the outcomes of such behaviour, parents and teachers may require training and support to provide interventions that decrease the behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour of children at school can alienate an individual or group from their peers and teachers. Interventions applied in the school setting, such as imposition of a suspension, may result in alienating parents from becoming part of the solution to the problem.

Unnever, Cullen and Agnew (2006) state that "children raised in unstructured environments fail to develop the ability to control their behaviour. Low self-control tends to be aligned with the absence of nurturance, discipline and training" (p. 5). Management strategies which improve behaviour (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010; Hart, 2010) comprise the following:

- developing fair, positive and specific rules for the setting;
- using verbal and tangible reinforcement;
- responding to undesirable behaviour by ignoring or giving a verbal reprimand;
- developing and maintaining positive relationships with their students;
- having high expectations about behaviour;
- having clear, consistent and agreed procedures for dealing with chronic or severe behaviours; and

- assessing the classroom environment for the suitability of placement of students and equipment.

These strategies as well as the psychodynamic approaches based on attachment theory and the development of trusting stakeholder relationships are also well supported in the literature (Hart, 2010; Walker, 2009). The commonality between home and school when supporting and managing children is being able to provide consistent positive expectations and nurturing from both teachers and parents. The way in which a child is parented and the quality of their attachment relationship impact on the child's social, emotional and academic performance, which in turn influences their learning and behaviour at school (Valdez et al., 2005).

Brotman et al., (2011) note that both parents and teachers want their children to succeed, regardless of the display of difficult behaviour. The alignment of disruptive behaviour and low academic achievement often result in parent and teacher despair and frustration. According to Sander, Sharkey, Olivarri, Tanigawa and Mauseth (2010) "the quality of the teacher student relationship is very important for student engagement…but exactly what teachers can do to promote positive relationships is elusive especially for students with behaviour problems" (p. 291). These researchers note that discipline policies, repeated suspensions, ineffective classroom management and weak school–community relationships contribute to the multiple risk factors associated with disengagement from learning at school and the propensity for delinquency.

Teacher Management of Student Behaviour

Like parents, teachers develop an understanding of a child's behaviour and how to manage it over time. Continual disruptive behaviour leaves teachers feeling inadequate and frustrated. Detention, suspension and expulsion are the maximum school-level penalties available as deterrents, however these methods do not support the development of appropriate behaviours or positive relationships with the student or the parents (Bidell & Deacon, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). Teacher stress affects not only the relationships among teacher, student and the student's family, but also the

quality of their teaching, which develops into negative attitudes towards students, parents and the workplace (Pas et al., 2010).

However, teachers adjust curricula and modify their classrooms to support students with learning and emotional needs. When teaching style was examined through the lens of parenting style, it was found that students' academic competence grew when there was consistent classroom management, support for student autonomy and teacher interest in the students personally (Walker, 2008). Although methods for changing behaviour can be taught and facilitated through various means in schools, Swinson (2010) states that some teachers feel uncomfortable delivering strategies to enhance self-esteem and emotional well-being, even after training. Universal school-wide approaches that support positive initiatives in dealing with difficult behaviour also support teachers to act consistently and fairly in these circumstances.

Outcomes of Disruptive Behaviour

For Parents

Parents of children with behaviour that is difficult to manage report feeling distressed, less competent, less satisfied, socially isolated and depressed due to the high level of conflict they endure (Beernink, Swinkels, Jan van der Gaag & Buitelaar, 2012). As a result, by the time their children begin school, "parents of children with disruptive behaviours may experience negative beliefs about their efficacy to support their child's education" (Semke et al., 2010, p. 293). Armed with inadequate coping strategies and depleted self-efficacy, these parents often avoid contact with the school as interactions with teachers usually involve discussion of the problematic behaviours. Thus, the outcome is a cyclic pattern of student problem behaviour and adult frustration.

For Teachers

Students with significant behaviour disorders are reported to comprise 6% of the student population in Australian schools (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2009).

However, Westwood and Graham (2000) place that figure at 40% when a range of less significant behaviours are added, such as continual noncompliance and disruptive behaviours. Teachers faced with such behaviours describe feeling ill prepared, frustrated, angry and emotionally exhausted (Bidell & Deacon, 2010). According to Clunies-Ross et al., (2008) "disruptive behaviour, teacher stress and teacher burnout remain significant concerns in Australian schools" (p. 693).

School policies and teacher management strategies may provide minimum support for a child who lacks social and academic competence. Enabling parents to become the strategic support link between home and school could multiply the benefits across the school and the local community. Researching parent involvement in PBL may identify ways to support students further in developing social and academic competence.

For Students

As previously stated, the outcomes for students who display disruptive or antisocial behaviour at home and at school are discouraging. The unconscious choice of some students to self-sabotage their education often has its roots in a combination of emotional and social problems compounded by learning difficulties (Hattie, 2008; Valdez et al., 2005; Yoshikawa, 1994). The complex nature of the problem requires a complex set of interventions. The PBL systems approach to managing student behaviour is one such intervention. However, when parents are involved in interventions to support their children, the opportunity for more positive outcomes increase, as will be discussed in a later in this chapter.

Attitudes and Approaches to Violent and Antisocial Behaviour

Violent and antisocial behaviour continues to be a serious problem throughout the world. Perceptions of the causes of such behaviour are often perpetuated by media coverage of events, leading to the stigmatising of certain groups of individuals. Mental illness, for example, is often linked to violent and antisocial behaviour. However, the literature explains that a person with a mental illness has no greater propensity for violence than the general population, unless it

converges with other risk factors such as substance abuse (Lurigio & Harris, 2009; Swanson, Swartz & Elbogen, 2004). Other factors associated with antisocial behaviour have been linked to domestic violence, inconsistent parenting and the perception of fairness in school settings (Fujiwara, Okuyama & Izumi, 2012; Thornton, 2014; Vieno, 2011). It is evident that single risk factors may be managed well, but the ability to manage cumulative risk requires more thoughtful and integrated approaches. The necessity to acknowledge the existence of multiple risk factors and to make provisions to address them is at the forefront of what this thesis is about. Without community understanding, training and access to support, violent and antisocial behaviour will continue to damage individuals and the attitudes of communities, including the very communities with the knowledge and expertise to help.

Parent Links with Learning and School

Parenting and Child Behaviour

As previously stated, the literature identifies the importance of parents in shaping the behaviour of their children (Easterbrooks & Abeles, 2000; Kim & Page, 2013; Kocayörük, 2010; Unnever et al., 2006). In his writings on child development, Berndt (1992) states that "parents teach their children how to behave, what to value and what to believe" (p. 429). Berndt considers parents to be important models of behaviour for their children and adds that some parents may not be aware of how much they influence their children's behaviour.

Each child is born with a set of inherited characteristics but each human being is a unique individual, shaped by their experiences. However, when managing a child's behaviour proves difficult, parents are reluctant to seek help or support, sometimes due to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and helplessness (Bradshaw, Glaser, Calhoun & Bates, 2006; Fox et al., 2012). Brotman et al., (2011) state that "research implicates specific parent behaviour management practices such as inconsistent, harsh parenting in the development of behaviour problems" (p. 259). They also report that young families dealing with multiple pressures such as financial

stress, poverty and a lack of time, resources and parenting skills contribute to the mismanagement of behaviour.

Sudies that cite parenting variables such as, little involvement or monitoring of children, harsh punishment and continual arguing, as predictors of conduct disorders and delinquency (Brotman et al., 2011; Valdez et al., 2005; Yoshikawa, 1994) recommend that early family intervention and support be available and easily accessible. There are clearly overlapping risk factors to be considered when undesirable behaviour is a concern. Insecure attachment, poor parent management, difficult temperaments, anxiety, depression, mental illness and more are all risk factors.

Rowe, Stewart and Patterson (2007) state:

> Creating links to those alienated or detached from communities allows them to share in the values and beliefs of the school community…discontinuities between home and school cultures for example in language, values and behavioural expectations, contribute to the low achievement of students from diverse cultural backgrounds…strong connections between the school environment and community agencies provide crucial support for those most at risk (p. 533).

Cumulatively, such variables may contribute to making individuals more vulnerable to psychopathology. It is therefore critical that research identifies strategies that improve parental involvement in the systems and processes of interventions such as PBL.

Parents and Student Academic Achievement

The meta-analyses by Fan and Chen (2001) and Jeynes (2005) have identified parents' interest and involvement in their child's education as an indicator of higher academic performance. While this may be true, many parents through their own lack of education, limited English proficiency or time constraints are limited in their influence in their child's education. Wegmann and Bowen (2010) suggest that families who share the values and belief systems of the school community have an unnoticed advantage over families whose cultural or social backgrounds do not

match those of the school. Thus, if parents find themselves in unfamiliar territory at school, they may consider themselves extraneous to the student–school relationship (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). The effect of this disconnection between home and school is that some parents consider that the only time they are in contact with the school is when there is a concern about their child's learning or behaviour (Swinson, 2010).

Parents who are involved in their child's education, for example by reading to them, helping with homework and engaging in general discussions regarding school, have children who show steady academic performance and fewer behaviour problems (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hattie, 2008). Unsurprisingly, parent involvement is difficult when parents are new to the country. They may be apprehensive about engaging with the school due to language barriers, variances in culture, customs and confidence, and a lack of physical resources. However, if we acknowledge the impact parents can have on the social and academic achievement of their children, these issues need to be addressed. Therefore, research which values the voices of parents, teachers and students contributes to an understanding of how to engage and promote more inclusive involvement of all parents regardless of advantage or disadvantage.

Parent Involvement in School

Parental involvement in school may require a physical presence to attend meetings, read with students or volunteer in ways that support the school and student learning. However, involvement may also be considered as reading with children at home or helping with homework. In both cases parents could be considered "involved", "collaborative" or in "partnership" with the school. Invitations to parents to become involved are commonplace. However, when parents do not respond to these requests, the reasons for their silence are often assumed by schools with little or no understanding of the motives for a parent's decision. Parent involvement is considered to advantage students' academic and social outcomes, and thus, there is a gap in the research investigating parent involvement to support student learning.

However, targeting parent involvement to improve academic and social disadvantage at the school level needs to include; family and school / community relationships to ensure significant long-term outcomes. The notion of parent involvement in schools encompassing reciprocal collegial relationships with teachers, cooperative decision-making and a shared responsibility for the education of our children is sanctioned by policymakers and multiple stakeholders. However, the many contextual variables that may exist within families and communities contribute to a lack of social and academic achievement. Continued scholarly conversation and research into parent involvement in schools would support the development of best practice guidelines.

Expectations of Schools

Structure of Education in Australia

Formal education in Australia begins in Kindergarten (or its equivalent) and is completed following Year 12 in senior secondary school. Each State and Territory Government has the primary responsibility for education, however arrangements are very similar throughout Australia (Retrieved November 8, 2017 from https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/australian-education/education-system). The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Strategic Plan (2012-2017) (https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/how-we-operate/strategies-and-plans/corporate-plans/fiveyrs-strategic-plan.pdf) lists two relevant goals: "Improving education and learning outcomes for all students" and "making it easier for people to be involved in their community" (p. 9). While it seems reasonable that schools would implement these goals, how they are achieved is varied based on the local needs of the student population and their relevant communities.

> Before children begin formal schooling they spend 26,000 hours in the care of their parents…in their school life 15,000 hours at school and 29,000 hours at home during the school years. While there is no doubt that schools can effect both achievement and learning dispositions, the origins of both

> are well in place before the child enters the school yard (Hattie, 2008, pp. 39–40).

Here Hattie inextricably links home and school and suggests that understanding more about individual families may further support the learning dispositions of students.

Policy and the Role of the Parent

Section 4(b) of the NSW Education Act, 1990 provides: "The education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents" (https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgibin/viewdb/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104). This guiding principle establishes a requirement for local school policy documents to acknowledge and value parent participation. Schools must develop a discipline code, outlining clear guidelines for behaviour to which staff, student and parents have contributed (NSW DET, 1996). The NSW DET "Student Welfare Policy" also states that "schools will assist families to access community support services" (1996, p. 8). How policies are communicated to parents and how schools implement these policies to encourage parent involvement are key questions for investigation.

Sugai et al., (2000) suggest that "many schools lack the capacity to identify, adopt and sustain policies, practices and systems that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all students" (p. 133). If schools are unable to encourage parent involvement through their policies and practices, this then adds to the complexity of effectively meeting the learning and behavioural needs of students. Sustainability of effective practices and systems is required to provide the academic and behavioural support for students to be successful (Nese et al., 2016). Thus, it is necessary to know the needs of the people within those systems. Adopting curriculum and welfare initiatives which unintentionally ignore the primary influence in a child's life reduces the effectiveness of these initiatives According to Janssens and Seynaeve (2000) parents as low-power stakeholders may need relationship building activities to cultivate trust before they feel confident to contribute to school initiatives. When difficult student behaviour is added to the context, building relationships with parents becomes paramount to achieving better outcomes for all stakeholders.

Teacher–Parent Relationships

The teacher–parent relationship can be complicated by many variables that affect the cultivation of this relationship. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002) engaging families in school requires building trusting relationships between teachers, families and communities, being supportive of a family's needs, and developing partnerships where responsibility and power are shared. This of course is not something that can be accomplished quickly, with strategic and long-term planning necessary to make this a reality.

Educated communities can relate to teachers as equals and source their own support with family concerns as required. Low-income and migrant populations both experience inequity in both resources and power, which means it can take "explicit effort…to give them confidence to relate to teachers as equals" (Warren, Hong, Leung, Rubin & Uy, 2009, p. 2212). In an Australian study, Hadley (2014) asks "whose voice and perspective is being listened to?" (p. 97) as she acknowledges the inequity in the teacher–parent relationship. The literature supports the view that the relationship building component of the bigger picture of parent involvement is the foundation for better academic and social outcomes for students (Auerbach, 2009; Ferlazzo, 2011; Hart, 2010).

Parenting Support

As reviewed previously, literature identifies the importance of the parents' influence on the behaviour of their children (Brotman et al., 2011; de Graaf, Onrust, Haverman & Janssens, 2009; Hattie, 2008; Semke et al., 2010; Valdez et al., 2005; Yoshikawa, 1994). When this influence is in harmony with the values and attitudes of the surrounding community, the general public are supportive. However, when the behaviour of children runs contrary to the norm, parents often become the focus of ridicule and blame. Parenting variables may be seen as risk factors for poor academic achievement and antisocial behaviour (Unnever et al., 2006; Yoshikawa, 1994) but it is the interaction of cumulative risk factors which may be the catalyst for long-term negative outcomes.

The noncompliant behaviour of a child can cause parents to feel distressed and inadequate and, thus, reluctant to seek help with the behaviour (Davis, Jones, Logsdon, Ryan & Wilkinson-McMahon, 2013; Dempster, Davis, Jones, Keating & Wildman, 2015). Without professional support, the behaviours will often escalate, increasing the unhealthy behaviour of the child and the parents. For this reason, parenting programs are seen as a pivotal component of early and ongoing intervention to decrease problematic behaviours in children. A number of parenting programs have been shown to improve various aspects of parenting, including adopting a consistent approach to difficult behaviour and increasing parent–child activities, resulting in reducing parent stress (Braet, Meerschaert, Meelevede, Bosmans, Van Leeuwen & De Mey, 2009; Chang, Park & Kim, 2009; de Graaf, Speetjens, Smit, de Wolff & Tavecchio, 2008; Letarte, Normandeau & Allard, 2010). The literature offers parenting programs as one measure to support better learning and behaviour outcomes for children. Enabling parents to understand, manage and cope with behaviour problems has seen a growth in broad, family-focused approaches to intervention and support.

Wraparound and Multidisciplinary Approaches

According to Eber, Breen, Rose, Unizycki and London (2008) an effective wraparound intervention approach in school "deliberately builds constructive relationships and support networks" (p. 16) that involve the parents, the student and the teacher. Such an approach begins with developing a rapport with the family in order to understand their needs and, with them, to construct a plan for support. The Pathways to Prevention project in Queensland, Australia (2002) found that the results of providing the Family Independence Program in conjunction with the Preschool Intervention Program were greater than delivering either program on its own (Freiberg et al., 2005). This project-built family connectedness, promoted attachment and reduced the level of difficult behaviour demonstrated by the children. Brotman et al., (2011) and Reid, Littlefield and Hammond (2008) indicate that providing family intervention in the context of pre-school and Kindergarten gives families the opportunity to be involved in non-stigmatising interventions that are framed around

school success. Several of the intervention programs trialled in pre-school settings with success include:

- Family Check-up - supports positive parenting and school readiness (Lunkenheimer et al., 2008);
- Early Head Start - mandates parental involvement (Chang et al., 2009);
- Positive Parenting Practices (PPP) - has seen worldwide success (de Graaf et al., 2008); and
- Incredible Years - improves parenting practices and parent–child relationships (Letarte et al., 2010).

Many researchers note that family interventions, particularly positive parenting training, have been effective across the following areas:

- preventing and reducing problem behaviour (Braet et al., 2009);
- understanding child development and improving social and academic skills (Brotman et al., 2011);
- improving communication between parents and teachers and improving parent–child/adolescent relationships (de Graaf et al., 2009);
- supporting transition to school (Hanisch et al., 2010);
- teaching routines and consistent behaviour management strategies (Letarte et al., 2010); and
- reducing family stress (Lunkenheimer et al., 2008).

In 2003, the OECD reported that there was a need for effective multidisciplinary intervention approaches that facilitate positive behaviour and enable success for all students in Australia. The complexities of human behaviour, however, make coordinating such a system very difficult indeed. Implications for the sustainability of a multidisciplinary wraparound system are embedded in understanding the needs of a given community and how the necessary resources can be mobilised.

Rowe (2009) suggests that, despite their best efforts, schools may lack the resources to meet the needs of their students. Thus, to meet specific needs families sometimes seek support outside of the school context. Wraparound or multidisciplinary interventions are more common in special education settings, or settings providing support to young people with significant mental health issues or delinquent behaviours, than in mainstream schools. Although families of school age children in Australia may access multiple services, these services are rarely organised by the school, and even if they are there is little opportunity for cross-consultation or collaboration between these services.

The literature review by Schurer Coldiron, Bruns and Quick (2017) determined that many wraparound interventions are implemented without clear guidelines or a framework to maintain the fidelity of practices. Considering these difficulties, it was suggested that more empirical studies are needed to ascertain the evidence-based practices necessary for implementation. Despite these problems, a meta-analysis by Suter and Bruns (2009) found positive effects from wraparound interventions.

Summary

This chapter provided an insight into student behaviour in schools. Theoretical perspectives were discussed as were the parent links to child behaviour and academic achievement. School policy, teacher management and relationships with parents also contributed to this review. Multidisciplinary and wraparound practices were examined as intervention structures to ameliorate the effects of challenging behaviour on parents and teachers. Chapter three will provide a historical overview of behaviour management and review the background literature on PBIS including its theoretical underpinnings, development and successes. The introduction of PBL into NSW schools will complete the literature review.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

> Contemporary research suggests that physical punishment does not effectively achieve … personal accountability for personal actions, that directs the child to problem solve [or] encourage the development of empathy (Carey, 2009, p. 4).

Corporal Punishment as a Management Tool

Corporal punishment is defined as "punishment of a physical nature" (Collins Dictionary, 1995, p. 157). During the 19th and 20th centuries, corporal punishment in the form of the cane or strap was an accepted disciplinary practice in public and private schools across Australia, and still remained so for some non-government schools and, until recently (2015), in the Northern Territory (Retrieved November 8, 2017 from https://newmatilda.com/2016/06/28/the-last-hold-out-caves-the-death-of-corporal-punishment-in-our-schools/).

Because each State and Territory Government in Australia has the primary responsibility for school education, the abolition of corporal punishment in schools has occurred at different times across these different educational jurisdictions. Table 1 summarises the different time periods in which corporal punishment was abolished across Australia.This abolition occurred both because of the acknowledgement that corporal punishment is detrimental to children (Hecker, Hermenau, Isele & Elbert, 2014; Straus, 2010) and the development of new approaches to behaviour management, including PBL.

Table 1: Abolition of Corporal Punishment in Australia

Year abolished	State or territory
1985	Victoria
1989	Queensland
1990	New South Wales
1991	South Australia
1997	Australian Capital Territory
1999	Tasmania
1999	Western Australia
2015	Northern Territory

Note. Adapted from "The Last Hold-out Caves: The Slow Death of Corporal Punishment in our Schools" by A. Corbett, 2016, *New Matilda*.

Table 1 shows Victoria to be the first state to abolish corporal punishment with the other states and the Australian Capital Territory to follow over the next 14 years. As the table reveals, it was 30 years after Victoria that the Northern Territory abolished corporal punishment in non-government and government schools. The Northern Territory Government had released a discussion paper stating that the Education Act (NT) had become outdated and needed reform (www.education.nt.gov.au) which lead to the 2015 decision. Evans and Fargason (1998) have suggested that it was a combination of public awareness and paediatric knowledge of child development that enabled the closer scrutiny of physical punishment and child abuse in the home and the school. As a consequence of the shift in community attitudes, state and territory education policies have changed, or are changing, to reflect current attitudes towards the physical punishment of children.

Even though most schools in Australia have banned the use of corporal punishment, the debate continues over the rights of parents to choose their disciplinary methods (Bunting, Webb & Healy, 2010; Romano, Bell & Norian, 2013). The Australian Institute of Family Studies explains that "all Australian states and territories condone (in principle) the use of force by a parent, by way of correction, toward a child" (www.aifs.gov.au). Legislative Acts or Criminal Codes in

each state and territory provide guidelines for the "reasonable chastisement" of children by their parents.

One practice available to schools in NSW as a deterrent to continual disruptive and problematic behaviour is to apply a suspension (Education Act, 1990). Students may incur a short suspension (up to four school days) or a long suspension (up to 20 school days) dependent on the severity of their misdemeanour. In 2013 in NSW there were a total of 66,379 suspensions recorded (Retrieved from www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/plans-reports-and-statistics/key-statistics-and-reports), and 24,122 of those students received suspensions multiple times. The numbers show that more than one third of all students suspended reoffended. According to the NSW DEC "Suspension and Expulsion of School Students Procedures" (https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associated-documents/suspol_07.pdf), suspension is not intended as a punishment, but rather a time for the student to reflect on their behaviour and accept responsibility to change their behaviour to comply with the expectations of the school. Also, suspension is most effective when parents are proactive, together with the school, in supporting their child to amend their behaviour. Interestingly, the parents of students with difficult behaviour reported feeling powerless, helpless, angry and often excluded from the decision-making processes (McDonald & Thomas, 2003). Therefore, to enable the suspension process to be most effective, it is important that all the stakeholders are heard (regarding the behaviour), informed (of policy, practices and strategies) and collectively engaged in the decision-making process (all stakeholders contributing and committing to a plan of action). Finding solutions to manage problematic behaviour is challenging for all concerned. For the stakeholders (school, students and parents) to find common ground, their discussion, reflection and shared responsibility for the behaviour must occur in a safe and supportive environment where each can contribute to generating the desired policy expectations.

Research suggests that multiple suspensions may precede delinquency, crime and drug addiction (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2014). Unfortunately, both school and student factors are identified as playing a role in the pathway to low academic performance and school truancy (Skiba et al., 2014). These factors are informed by research (Letourneau et al., 2001 Lunkenheimer et al., 2008;

Murray et al., 2010; Yoshikawa, 1994) as risk factors for negative school and life outcomes. Knowing this, a collaborative team including school personnel, parents and outside sources of support, such as psychological interventions, can endeavour to encourage protective factors to negate the influence of the risk. The use of the term "student factors" opens a gateway for assumption about "family factors". It is therefore of the utmost importance that parents be supported in their "partnership" with the school to understand these risk and protective factors, as a means to support their child and the policy expectations.

There are numerous studies explicating the benefits of parent involvement in schools, both for students and for the school organisation (Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Minke & Anderson, 2005; Nir, 2009; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997; Wong, 2012) that support the NSW DoE policy expectations. Conversely, studies documenting the involvement of parents in the establishment, intervention processes and the ongoing review of PBL universal strategies in Australia are yet to be included in the available literature. Research that explores the motivating and encouraging factors to improve parent involvement may reignite enthusiasm for schools to drive this important element of education.

Background to PBS and Associated Strategies

With the removal of corporal punishment from schools, and the global recognition of its detrimental effects on children (Hecker, Hermenau, Isele & Elbert, 2014; Straus, 2010) new approaches were required for both parents and teachers to manage undesirable behaviours (Keen & Knox, 2004). The demand for different approaches to managing behaviour began the slow cultural change toward understanding the reasons for certain behaviours through the use of functional behaviour assessment (Moreno & Bullock, 2011; Moreno, Wong-Lo, Short & Bullock, 2014). These understandings drew on behaviourist learning theories within psychology to develop interventions which apply appropriate consequences to deter unwanted behaviours and reinforce desired behaviours.

The foundations of positive behaviour strategies are Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) (Fisher, Groff & Roane, 2011) and Positive Behaviour Support

(PBS) (Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai & Horner, 2009). Applied Behaviour Analysis uses information from the functional behaviour assessment with regard to the target behaviour, to assess the function of that behaviour. The function of a behaviour or set of behaviours is the means used to fulfil a desire. Once the function of the behaviour is ascertained, intervention mostly involves the teaching of a replacement behaviour which will satisfy the desire and which is more socially and contextually acceptable. Applied Behaviour Analysis has a historical footing in special education with "the general principles of learning and behaviour used to resolve problems of social relevance" (Fisher, Groff & Roane, 2011, p. 11) in educational settings.

With the recognition that problem behaviours can impede the development of vocational and social success (Dunlap et al., 2009) the scope of intervention was widened and thus PBS developed from ABA. "PBS is a broad approach for organizing the physical, social, educational, biomedical, and logistical supports needed to achieve lifestyle goals" (Dunlap et al., 2009, p. 3). While these developments were occurring in the area of special education, effective interventions were also being sought for students with behaviour disorders in mainstream schools. A succinct historical summary is provided by Dunlap et al., (2009):

> With conceptual and empirical underpinnings in applied behaviour analysis, PBS emerged during the 1980s as a comprehensive approach for organizing and providing community supports and resources for persons with disabilities who engage in challenging behavior. As a field, PBS has experienced phenomenal growth over a span of 25 years and is now an integral component of public education in many schools in practically every state in the United States, improving not only the behavior of those children with the most challenging behaviors but also the behavior of all children (p. vi).

The outcome of this reflection on the behaviour management of children drew analysis and intervention strategies together with a differentiated approach to focus on a diverse cohort of mainstream students. This approach to behaviour management is comprehensive and primarily preventative; it requires coordinated and collaborative systems that reflect the needs of individuals and groups.

PBIS as it Developed in the United States

The overall concept of Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS) is explained by Sugai and Simonsen (2012):

> PBIS is an *implementation framework* that is designed to enhance academic achievement and social behaviour outcomes for all students by (a) emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence-based behavioural practices; and (b) organizing resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity [emphasis in original] (p.1).

Concept, Framework and Efficacy of PBIS

The concept of PBIS resulted from changing attitudes toward corporal punishment in the 1980s, and research to understand and ameliorate challenging behaviours (Dunlap et al., 2009). During the 1990s in the United States, the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports was established to assist schools in supporting students with behavioural difficulties (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). The PBIS approach is one of prevention, using effective interventions and supports developed from multiple theoretical perspectives which are necessary when the scope of disruptive behaviour is recognised (Dunlap, Carr, Horner Zarcone & Schwartz, 2008). One of the strengths of this approach is that the data used to determine the frequency and function of the behaviour are also the platform from which the interventions are moulded thus making the interventions more behaviourally and contextually relevant. In summary, the process is born from theory, based on data and continually evaluated by schools to ensure interventions are modified according to behavioural and contextual changes over time.

PBIS has a predefined framework based on four essential elements:

- data—which drive and support the decision-making;
- practices—which target and support student behaviour;
- outcomes—which are social and academic competence; and
- systems—which support staff understanding, development and behaviour. (https://www.pbis.org/school).

The framework enables the examination of a school as an integrated ecosystem with "academic and behaviour targets…endorsed…by students, families and educators" (https://www.pbis.org/school). Construction of a continuum of positive behaviour support for all students across all classroom and non-classroom settings is based on the school's specific contextual data. The intervention practices support appropriate behaviour by providing consistent instruction, rewards and consequences. The outcomes are monitored and become part of a cyclic review process which includes the ongoing training and development of support staff from pre-implementation throughout the ongoing review processes. Interventions are guided by a tiered system within this framework which provides interventions at three levels: school-wide (inside and outside of the classroom), small group and individual. This tiered system will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

When a school decides to implement PBIS, it must first identify a team who will be trained and become responsible to coordinate and disseminate information and resources. The stakeholders then agree upon three to five behavioural expectations (for example, "be safe; be responsible; and be a learner") applicable to their setting. They create a matrix of expectations (see Appendix A) designed and developed to suit the different areas in the school. From this matrix, teaching resources are created to enable all staff to teach the behavioural expectations for each area of the school. This may include, for example, behaviour in class: walk in the classroom (be safe); have all your equipment for the lesson (be responsible); listen and follow teacher instructions (be a learner). The idea behind this is to ensure that all adults in the school use common practices and consistent language when managing student behaviour. The knowledge of which behavioural expectations to teach is drawn from data collected from the school. Targeting behaviours that are commonplace within the school allows students to also develop a common language and common practices, with the knowledge that a consistent response will apply regardless of the teacher on duty.

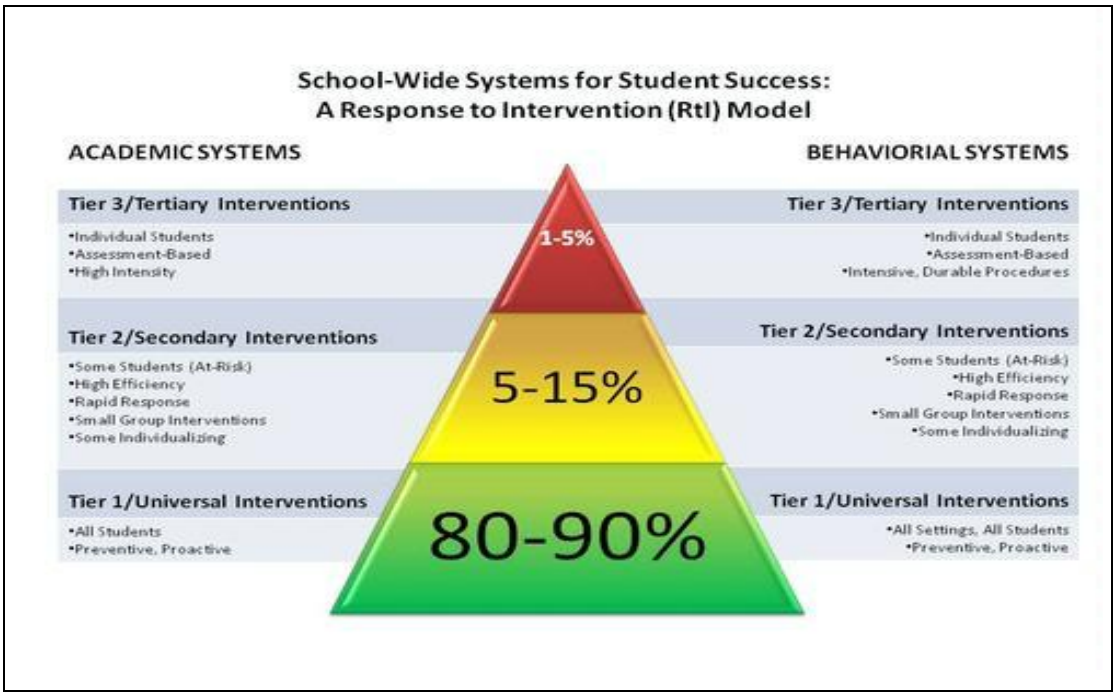
When behaviour is challenged in the school setting, students may react in many different ways. The tiered approach of PBIS which incorporates the four elements outlined above supports the whole school, with the universal system and strategies overlapped by small group and individualised interventions to meet the

needs of all students within the school. The next section examines the tiered development of PBIS into School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS).

SWPBS: A Tiered Approach

In schools, methods of teaching behaviour, as with the curriculum, must be differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Consequently, the SWPBS "Implementation Blueprint" (Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, 2010) proposes a tiered approach to service delivery dependent upon the frequency, intensity and severity of the behaviours in question, resulting in a continuum of support (see Figure 1). The systems do not show evidence of any parent involvement across the tiers.

Figure 1: Three-tiered Continuum of Positive Behaviour Support



Retrieved November 8, 2017 from http://rob.mansfieldschools.com/students/p__b__i__s_

Sugai and Horner (2009) provide a comprehensive explanation of SWPBS (see also www.pbis.org). In Figure 1, the universal prevention tier at the base is the starting point for the whole school process. The principle is to provide a prevention framework based on school data, use research-based scientifically validated interventions, monitor student progress and evaluate regularly. The secondary level

targets small groups at risk of developing antisocial behaviour and is underpinned by the universal prevention tier. The focus is to make problem behaviour less effective and positive behaviour more rewarding. The tertiary level applies individualised interventions to those few students who demonstrate antisocial behaviour. Interventions at this level are focused on the unique needs of the student. Such interventions involve community support and a team management approach which changes over time according to need. Again, the underpinning practice is the continuation of the universal prevention structures and strategies which apply to all students, school wide.

The "Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment" (Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2010) suggests that young people should be encouraged to develop positive social and academic skills to enable them to participate fully in the wider community and achieve personal fulfilment from their life choices. With the school and home environments having a significant impact on the skill building and choice making of young people, involving families in behavioural interventions seems crucial to the formula for positive outcomes (Vaughn et al., 2005). The PBIS website uses the following phrases to acknowledge the important role of parents in the development of educational and behavioural outcomes: Parents are a key component; have an integral role; should be encouraged to be involved. Furthermore, the site lists explanatory letters regarding PBIS systems and processes and suggests ways to involve parents such as volunteering https://www.pbis.org. However, it may be that without specific guidelines or a framework to enable and support schools to involve parents, simply providing written information and opportunities for parents to volunteer in school, does not reflect a true commitment to the vital role parents share with teachers.

At the present time, there is limited research available on parent involvement in the processes of SWPBS (McIntosh et al., 2014). McIntosh et al., noted that active parent involvement is an important feature for the sustainability of SWPBS. However, their research reported mainly on in-school and in-classroom determinants such as quality teaching (NSW DET, 2008) and process fidelity (McIntosh et al., 2014) rather than issues surrounding parent involvement in SWPBS or more widely within schools. When home school relationships are strong, the message to the

children is that a united agreement exists regarding school and home values for education and social behaviour. In these circumstances, the fidelity of the processes related to PBL implementation and its sustainability are ensured. Thus, research is needed to examine the effects of parent involvement in SWPBS on student academic and social performance, and the sustainability of this system's approach to behaviour management. This Australian study will contribute to that knowledge and further the discussion around parent involvement in school.

Planning Through Evidence-Based Decision-Making

School-wide Positive Behaviour Support is not a specific program in itself but a structured process that enables schools to build capacity from within, to manage student behaviour and academic success using contextual knowledge. Accumulating evidence that a problem exists enables solutions to be sought. Accumulating evidence that the problem still exists or has been solved enables evaluating the process and reviewing the strategies. According to the "Evaluation Blueprint for School-Wide Positive Behavior Support" (Algozzine et al., 2010) evaluation questions are repeated in cycles, enabling consistent reference to particular contextual markers such as who, where, when, why and what about a particular circumstance. This replication allows for the continual improvement of the processes and implementation strategies.

The PBIS website (www.pbis.org) offers examples of survey question sets which may be used by schools or adapted to suit their context. Gathering information in this way assists school teams to make decisions based on explicit data drawn from their specific context. Assumption is removed from the process and replaced by data to provide the solid basis on which decisions can be made and teaching and learning can occur. This process of gathering data is applied across all three tiers, tier one universals, tier two secondary and tier three tertiary, so that decisions about the course of intervention are based on the needs of individuals and groups. The fidelity of this process is dependent on PBIS being understood and accepted by all the stakeholders, enabling interventions to be thoughtfully assessed, planned and followed through. Mathews, McIntosh, Frank and May (2014) state that teacher acceptance may not be enough to ensure fidelity, and that mentoring to integrate the

core elements, mentioned previously, into their daily routines may improve the effectiveness of PBIS processes.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of PBIS in the United States

As reported in the literature review, PBIS originated in the United States from theories and strategies more commonly used at the time in special education (Dunlap et al., 2009). The current framework was developed in response to a need to better manage disruptive behaviour in more general educational settings. As Lewis, Mitchell, Bruntmeyer and Sugai (2016) state, PBIS is about creating environments that seed success while addressing problematic behaviours with a continuum of support. With the expansion of PBIS implementation, collecting data on its effectiveness was a natural and necessary progression. Evaluations of the PBIS systems approach have been conducted in a variety of school settings across the United States with positive outcomes being attributed to its implementation.

Bradshaw, Mitchel and Leaf (2010) conducted a five-year longitudinal randomised controlled effectiveness trial, and found suspensions and discipline referrals decreased significantly in 37 elementary schools in the United States which were implementing SWPBS. In a large secondary school in New Zealand, Hill and Brown (2013) found that, in the ten-week period prior to an individualised intervention, the number of out-of-class referrals ranged from 37 to five per week. In the ten weeks post intervention, the range had reduced from two to zero. These researchers focused on an at-risk population at one high school and commented that the SWPBS tertiary level strategies required staff training, support for the student when out of class, and teacher support to enable continuity of practices. A much larger study of 428 schools in the United States, including elementary, middle and high schools, found that "schools demonstrated a statistically significant improvement on all social behaviour and academic measures" (Simonsen et al., 2012, p. 12). Hill and Brown also concluded that implementation fidelity is an important factor related to higher ratings of all behaviour outcomes, and also higher performance levels in maths.

The commitment with which teachers implement the PBIS processes (PBL in Australia) affect the integrity of the outcomes. Thus, implementation fidelity is an important feature worthy of consideration. The fidelity with which the framework's essential elements (data, practices, outcomes and systems) are implemented has been the subject of research (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo & Leaf, 2008). Interestingly, the contextual influences which affect the research findings have also been the subject of investigation (Pas, Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2014) with policy, training, personal experience and leadership identified as factors which may impede or promote the positive effects of PBIS implementation and the subsequent interventions. Studies continue to evaluate PBIS from different viewpoints. Ongoing evaluations of different aspects of this school-wide systems approach to behaviour management and intervention are necessary to continually address the reliability of the processes which enable success for schools and individuals.

Teaching, acknowledging and rewarding desired behaviours offers a proactive alternative approach to behaviour management rather than reliance on inconsistent, reactive strategies when inappropriate behaviour occurs. Thus, with the publication of consistent positive effectiveness data, PBIS has drawn the attention of Australian educators as explained earlier in this chapter.

Introduction of PBIS to Schools in NSW

Background and Preparations for the Initial Implementation in WSR Schools

In 2004, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET)[3] Western Sydney Region (WSR) led a series of focus group discussions with teachers which revealed "widespread dissatisfaction with the ways that behaviour problems were being dealt with" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 1). That same year, George Sugai spoke about the PBIS model at the Australian Association of Special Education Conference, impressing the NSW DET WSR personnel attending. As a consequence, in 2005 Tim Lewis (co-director of pbis.org) presented the PBIS model (Lewis & Sugai, 1999) to principals in the WSR, with the regional leadership team adopting

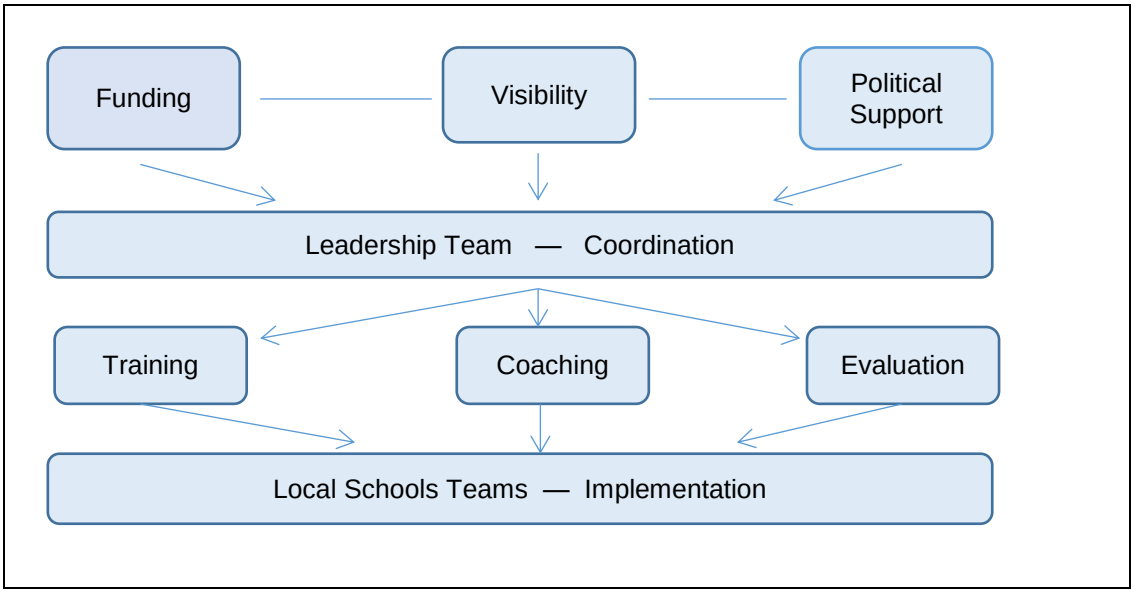
[3] Now the NSW Department of Education (DoE).

and renaming PBIS as PBL (Positive Behaviour for Learning) to "reflect the regional priority on improving student outcomes" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 2).

In 2005, the WSR leadership team set about organising information to enable schools to decide whether they would implement PBL. The regional leadership team provided information across the WSR which explained the concept of PBL, its efficacy and the benefits to schools and students. Initially 51 schools applied to be trained in the PBL approach, with a further 111 expressing an interest in participating; subsequently the number of schools committing to PBL grew every semester. When investigating the systems transfer from PBIS to PBL it was noted that "any changes were merely cosmetic" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 68). At this point in time, PBL was only being rolled out in Western Sydney with a view to expansion, following feedback and evaluations.

The NSW DET WSR has stressed the importance of creating a strategic and comprehensive process that preserves fidelity to the "PBIS School-wide Implementers Blueprint" (Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, 2010). Figure 2 represents the organisational structure to establish the ongoing systems that will support the school-wide universal prevention focus in Australia. Political support and funding sustains the leadership coordination team to provide school team and coach training and to gather and review evaluation data across the implementation of PBL practices. Western Sydney Region has adopted the following organisational model for the region-wide implementation of PBL (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: PBL Organisational Model



Adapted from the Organisational System for PBL in WSR (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 5)

The NSW DEC explain that PBL provides a framework that supports the academic and social needs of all students from early childhood through to the senior years of school, and follows the "data, systems and practices" elements of PBIS in the United States (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au).

The training of school personnel first develops their knowledge of the PBL approach; then they are assessed for their willingness to apply this approach school wide. At least 80% of staff must be committed to engage in the school processes for the approach to be viably maintained. The schools then engage a team to collect data on student behaviour and disseminate PBL information to all school staff.

Once the data have been shared with staff, the methods for defining, teaching and supporting appropriate behaviours are developed with staff input. The resulting schemas form a cyclic process of data collection (what is happening), analysis (what do we need to do), teaching/intervention (develop and implement interventions based on the data analysis) and evaluation (what is the effect of the intervention). This cyclic process is followed throughout each tier of support along the continuum.

If parent involvement in the PBL processes has not been encouraged in the implementation of the universal stage, it is less likely to occur as planning begins for the development of tier two and tier three strategies.

Policy Principles and Objectives of Public Education and the Goals for PBL in NSW

Two principles of public education as stated in the NSW Education Act, 1990 are: "the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents" (section 4(b)) and "[there will be] provision of opportunities for parents to participate in the education of their children" (section 6(m)). These statements imply a joint participatory mandate between the school and the parents.

This theme is continued in the "Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy" (NSW DET 2006a):

> The aim of the partnership between school community members and schools is to develop socially responsible young people who are capable of making informed decisions. This is achieved through an effective social, cultural and academic curriculum which caters for the individual needs of students (section 3.4).

The National Safe Schools Framework (2011) also addresses features of these departmental policies with its nine elements to assist schools to maintain a safe and supportive environment:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school;
2. A supportive and connected school culture;
3. Policies and procedures;
4. Professional learning;
5. Positive behaviour management;
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum;
7. A focus on student well-being and student ownership;
8. Early intervention and targeted support; and

9. Partnerships with families and community. (https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/national_safe_schools_framework.pdf)

The Quality Teaching in New South Wales Public Schools framework (http://www.kincumber-p.schools.nsw.edu.au/documents/10079662/10085935/quality_teaching_framework.pdf) suggests that members of the local community should be sourced as teaching resources to create links between real life experiences and classroom curricula. Without a relationship with parents and the local community, it is unlikely that their knowledge and experiences could be linked to learning programs in this way.

Continuing the emphasis on collaborative community and parent relationships, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (http://tsa.det.nsw.edu.au./docs/Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.pdf) in particular Standards 7.3 and 7.4, link children's learning and well-being to respectful, collaborative relationships with parents and teacher professional learning. The following extracts are specifically relevant to the importance of involving parents, connecting with local services and teacher training:

7.3.1 Understand strategies for working effectively, sensitively and confidentially with parents/carers.

7.3.4 Identify, initiate and build on opportunities that engage parents/carers in both the progress of their children's learning and the educational priorities of the school.

7.4.1 Understand the role of external professionals and community representatives in broadening teachers' professional knowledge and practice.

7.4.4 Take a leadership role in professional and community networks and support the involvement of colleagues in external learning opportunities. (http://tsa.det.nsw.edu.au/docs/Australian_Professional_Standards_for_Teachers.pdf)

Although the term "parent" appears in PBL documentation, the major focus of PBL implementation is to enable staff to become proactive in the prevention of problematic behaviour through a systematic approach. This approach centres round the creation of a consistent whole school language to teach and manage social and academic behaviours.

When PBL is implemented well:

- students respond positively as they have been taught what is expected of them
- staff deliver consistent responses to student learning and behaviour
- students feel safe and cared for at school. Their parents, family and community are more involved in their school
- unproductive and challenging behaviour can be significantly reduced for most students.
  (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au)

The PBL website (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) suggests that schools invite parents to become part of their school PBL team to offer their perspective on decision-making about PBL processes and strategies. The endorsement by parents as mentioned above may come from a retrospective process on conditions already in place, rather than from the continuous active role of parents in the development of rules and procedures.

The strategic directions for PBIS Australia (2015–18) include:

- identify best practice frameworks that align with or support the PBIS framework (1.7)
- communicate PBIS implementation logic to connect to national and state initiatives (2.3)
- adapt blueprint documents to Australian context (3.1)
- map implementation and needs (3.2)
  (https://sites.google.com/site/pbisaustralia/system/app/pages/search?scope=search-site&q=strategic+directions+2015+-+2018).

The findings from the present research study may support these strategic directions for PBL in Australia and the goals of PBL into the future.

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (http://scseec.edu.au/archive/Publications/Publications-archive/The-Adelaide-Declaration.aspx) acknowledges parents as the child's first teacher and the crucial role of the school teacher in the process of learning. The declaration states that schooling contributes to the development of a student's self-esteem, motivation to learn and a purposeful future. It is assumed that other "contributors" would include the parents, and if so, is it not imperative to apply more than rhetoric to their partnership in the learning process?

NSW education policies (NSW DET, 1996, 2006a) consistently refer to student well-being, positive behaviour management, targeted support and family and community partnerships. However, while the rhetoric is clear, the action in regard to family partnership, involvement and inclusion does not seem to be as well defined. As a result, family or parent participation opportunities are often tokenistic, although enacted with good intention.

This study will determine whether some families require individualised support to participate at a comfortable level in school life. To pursue action from policy rhetoric and the objectives of PBL, a procedural framework is necessary to allow schools to design strategies that are suitable to their parent population and that enable schools to target support to the individual needs of families. Such programs encourage mutual respect and build relationships between school personnel, families and the wider community.

Evaluation of Effectiveness of the NSW Model PBL

Positive Behaviour for Learning continues to be implemented throughout Australia although efficacy research is limited. Thus, the PBL research (Mooney et al., 2008) is used extensively as a point of reference in this section. Although initial data have identified PBL as having a positive impact on a number of criteria, Mooney et al., (2008) state that:

> in-depth evaluation of PBL implementation at further schools will be important for clarifying the school-based elements of implementation that support PBL effectiveness. This will be especially valuable for refining the integration of learning into the PBL model and enhancing the local model accordingly (p. v).

The writer of this thesis strongly suggests that the "elements of implementation" include parents. In fact, if it is the most troublesome students who are perceived to benefit from the behaviour and learning processes of PBL, then parent involvement is imperative. Mooney et al., (2008) state that the implementation of the universal level of PBL has its limits when it comes to dealing with students with difficult behaviour problems, and that there is a need to continue with the implementation procedures for tier two (targeted group) and tier three (individualised) interventions. However, the emphasis remains on teacher data, teacher-led interventions and teacher–student interactions and relationships. "Support for cultivating relationships between schools and parents is not articulated in the PBIS blueprint" (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 65) therefore research that furthers understanding of this relationship will advance knowledge in this area.

As schools in Australia seek new and innovative ways to address behaviour and learning, Mooney et al., (2008) suggest that:

> it is a particularly important strategy to ensure contextual relevance in terms of content, delivery and resourcing of the specialised interventions required at these levels [tier two and three] of intervention for behaviour support, for learning and for children's well-being (p. 81).

The contexts in which a child lives and learns are the home and the school. Therefore, the significant people in the child's life must be included in any intervention that specifically targets that child to generalise the effects of any such intervention.

> An important direction for WSR is therefore to continue to identify which initiatives…its schools could connect to [to] enable a robust outcome for PBL, but more importantly, for the success of students' learning…Further work…to consider the interface between PBL and other related school

> initiatives will enhance the process of contextualising the PBL initiative to meet the needs of schools…and support students' positive behaviour and learning (Mooney et al., 2008, p. 75).

One Australian study measured and compared attitudes and learning through the examination of student self-concept (Barker et al., 2008). The study included primary and high schools, 41 schools in total. Ten of these schools were on a wait list (control group), and the remaining 31 were at various stages of PBL implementation. The findings showed higher student self-concept for those in PBL schools although the effects on learning were weak. Students from the PBL schools also perceived that they had better relationships with their parents than those from non-PBL schools. Limitations for this study were noted, with the researchers being aware that changes in behaviour and learning need to be determined over a longer period than the 12-month duration of this study.

The processes and practices of PBL implementation are of course focused on better behaviour and learning outcomes for students. Two questions are noteworthy here. The first is: What precedes an outcome? The second is: What predicts an outcome? Investigating the predictors may enable better procedures. If a positive self-concept is a predictor of better behaviour and learning outcomes, surely parents are the original architects of a child's understanding of self, and as such should be a partner in nurturing a positive learning self-concept. Therefore, focusing on the broader contextual influences of family and community may highlight the need to enable better processes for family and community involvement in schools.

The NSW DEC and individual school policies articulate the importance of encouraging parents to participate, jointly, in educating their children. Teachers often say that they want to make a positive difference in the lives of the children they teach. Linked together by this common goal, teachers and parents would be a formidable alliance in supporting children socially and academically. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge scholarly views on parent involvement and the implications for policies, schools and interventions.

Significance of Parent Involvement

The responsibility for implementing inclusive strategies for parent involvement does not rest with the parents alone but with each school.

> In theory, community involvement in schools is an opportunity for a more democratic and participatory approach to school functioning – one that can serve to enhance students' achievement and well-being, build stronger schools, assist families, and revitalize communities. In reality however it is too often a reminder of the difficulty of implementing inclusive strategies for educational reform (Sanders, 2003, p. 173).

Therefore, opportunities for schools to develop, an appreciation of the significance of parents as educational partners, the capabilities of parents to engage with the school at a range of levels, and lastly but perhaps most importantly, opportunities for parents to foster relationships with the staff would be a more participatory approach to school functioning. With some careful planning, starting with understanding the diversity of any given parent population, barriers can be overcome and trusting relationships can be developed over time.

When students pose learning or behaviour problems at school that interfere with their academic progress, it is appropriate that teachers speak to the parents. If the first conversation with a teacher is one which raises concerns, the parent is likely to be surprised and perhaps feel they are being judged as incompetent (Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2007). Conversely, the intention of policy is one of shared decision-making. However, according to Fenning et al., (2012) this does not happen without a planned intervention strategy to involve families. The supportive framework of SWPBS as advocated by Fenning et al., (2012) has the potential to positively affect behaviour and self-control with proactive family participation.

Therefore, the purpose of this research to investigate the inclusion of parents in PBL systems and processes, and in school more widely, may provide insights into ways to strengthen school-wide universal, small-group and individual interventions and support parents more broadly with becoming involved in their children's education.

An initiative developed in Hawaii has highlighted the dramatic changes that can be achieved by increasing parent involvement in schools. Through a grant from the US Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, the Parent Information and Resource Center was created in Hawaii (www.hawaiipirc.org). The explicit aim of the centre is to nurture school–family–community partnerships and improve student academic achievement through encouraging parent involvement in their children's education (www.hawaiipirc.org). The centre provides a variety of activities to support parent relationships with teachers and with each other. Activities are designed to help parents to understand how to access support for family needs and to develop skill sets and knowledge that help them understand the school system and support their children's education. Evaluation demonstrated that 100% of parent participants changed their behaviour to support their children academically, and that student attendance showed statistically significant gains.

Research overwhelmingly supports parent involvement in school as having a significant influence on children's academic achievement and behaviour (Coleman, 2013; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss (2006); Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Kolbert et al., 2014; Nir & Ami, 2005; Wilder, 2014). Programs developed to assist in improving difficult and antisocial behaviours in children and teenagers are more successful when they involve parents (Cholewa et al., 2010; Kolbert et al., 2014) (refer to Table 2). The reason for this may lie in the collaborative nature of such programs, which place less emphasis on blame and more on learning and implementing strategies to assist all the stakeholders. Table 2 reflects a small sample of the extensive variety of programs that are available. These were selected because of their including a teaching component for all participants in learning both academic and social skills. Although collaborative, family-centred interventions have proven value (Cholewa et al., 2010; Kolbert et al., 2014), assessment of the appropriateness of such an approach in individual situations is necessary because not all children who demonstrate problematic behaviour need that level of support. Teachers are learned and experienced practitioners who are consistently evaluating and modifying their behaviour management strategies in the classroom. The Teaching Pyramid for example, supports teacher behaviour and best practice to encourage solutions to

challenging behaviour without the need for further intervention (Fox, Dunlap, Joseph & Strain, 2006).

Table 2: Summary of Program Content

Program name	Parent training includes	Teacher training includes	Child social skills training includes
Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT)	Two-hour group sessions over 18–24 weeks • Social skills • Problem-solving strategies • Academic strategies with reading	• Social skills • Problem-solving development for the whole class • Daily family contact to discuss concerns	• Problem-solving skills and strategies • Social skills development
Fast Track	Two hours per week for 22 weeks • Child rearing • Social skills • Problem-solving strategies • Joint parent–child sessions to consolidate and generalise learning	• Social skills and problem-solving development for the whole class • Bi-weekly family contact to discuss concerns	• Social skills and problem-solving • Academic tutoring for those at risk
Raising Healthy Children	• Child rearing • Problem-solving • Conflict management skills • Academic support • Social skills development	• Social skills and problem-solving development	• Problem-solving skills and strategies • Social skill development • Academic tutoring for those at risk
The Incredible Years	Two-hour group sessions per week • Enhances parent knowledge of natural and logical consequences • Problem-solving strategies • Family–school collaboration strategies	• Weekly family contact to discuss concerns • Social skills and problem-solving development	• Support for academic success • Problem-solving skills and strategies • Social skills development

The common features of these programs were the inclusion of social skills training for the children that involved training the teachers, and parenting skills training. Thus teachers, parents and the children were proactively engaged in learning skills for change at the same time. Cholewa et al., (2010) responded to this composite approach to intervention by conveying that:

> The multi-family group format used in these programs creates a supportive network for parents to express their fears and anxieties and to try out new interactions with their child…it represents a less blaming, and a more collaborative approach to consulting with parents than the typical parent–teacher encounter (p. 21).

Forging strong connections between home and school, and up-skilling students, teachers and parents maximises the protective factors and minimises the risk factors when it comes to students developing an antisocial profile. When considering the link between parent–child attachment and the quality of the caregiving relationship with the development of juvenile delinquency (Kim & Page, 2013) and that "early parent involvement has the potential to influence children's academic achievement" (Coleman, 2013, p. 52) to exclude parents is to provide patchwork intervention, perhaps at the expense of long-term effectiveness and generalisability of skills.

Parent involvement, as asserted above, is not only to support behaviour modification but also academic achievement. It is therefore important to realise the potential of parent involvement in PBL from the initial implementation phase through the tiers of intervention to maximise the effectiveness of the strategies used. Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support is identified as a prevention framework; thus, from the point of view of Hemphill et al., (2009) effective intervention should consider the multiplicity of risk and protective factors for the effective prevention of problematic behaviours.

While this assertion may be true for the child, it may also be true for their parents. According to Coleman (2013) "to form a truly collaborative family–teacher partnership, parents need self-confidence to advocate for their children's education and general welfare" (p. 75). Thus, initiatives that support and empower parents may

need to be incorporated into an overall plan to improve the long-term effectiveness of interventions. Investing in such initiatives may empower families to feel that they indeed have a significant contribution to make to their children's social and academic futures. As appropriately stated by Coleman (2013) "empowered families are defined by their self-confidence…disempowered families lack the self-confidence needed to participate in family involvement activities" (p. 216).

The self-efficacy and empowerment of parents to become involved in the education of their children may be better understood through the researcher's engagement with this study. The perspectives of the teachers, parents and students may provide insights into parent self-efficacy and empowerment issues which could otherwise remain unknown and, therefore, ignored.

Summary

Following from an understanding of behaviour theories and the complexities of parenting and teaching children, this chapter tracked the changing community attitudes towards the corporal punishment of children and the development of PBIS in the United States through to the implementation of PBL in NSW schools. The literature examined the efficacy of PBIS and the interface with NSW education policy objectives. The chapter concluded with a review of the significance of parent involvement, which is the key concern of this thesis.

While the literature review has provided valuable information and a backdrop for the current study, the following chapters will provide the important perspectives of education stakeholders on parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely. Examining the involvement of parents in PBL implementation in two schools is a powerful way of assessing how parents are involved in school. Chapter four will provide the aims, research questions and the rationale for this investigation.

CHAPTER 4

AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

Introduction

The foundation for this study has been an understanding of behaviour theories, approaches to behaviour management, parents understanding of school policies and their perception of being involved in school. As parents are fundamental to this research, their significance was established with reference to children's social development and academic performance. The literature highlighted the important role of parents in the lives of their children, and policy documents affirmed this importance and acknowledged parents' shared responsibility for the education of children.

This chapter will begin by discussing the significance of the present investigation. It will then set out the aims, the research questions and their rationale. The chapter will conclude with a short summary of the content and a brief overview of Chapter five.

Significance of the Study

As previously discussed, current literature and NSW DoE policies recognise parent involvement as both necessary and vital to successful academic and social outcomes for children (Coleman, 2013; Fan & Williams, 2010; Ingram et al., 2007; Kim & Page, 2013; NSW DEC, 2010; Ransom & Urichuk, 2008). Nevertheless, a gap exists between the intent of policy that parents be involved in school and the current manner in which parent involvement or participation is enacted within the context of PBL and in schools more widely (Khanal, 2013; Woodrow et al., 2016). The policies state the intention to involve parents; however, without clear guidelines and procedures to support schools, the literature (Khanal, 2013; Woodrow et al., 2016) states that there remains a reliance on traditional parent involvement practices.

Thus, while the policies and PBL literature, discussed in Chapter one advocate parental support for and involvement in school processes and practices, the lack of clear guidelines or strategies may present a barrier to schools enacting best practice to encourage parent involvement. Hence, without such protocols in place, it becomes the responsibility of individual schools to decide when and how parents become involved. If parents are not familiar with school protocols, they may be uncertain of how to approach the school to express an opinion regarding school policies or practices. Thus, the school–parent relationship and parent confidence and self-efficacy may be influential factors in engaging parents in school. As highlighted in the previous chapter, schools are left with a dilemma in relation to involving parents. Consequently, the problem of not having guidelines for parent involvement is multiplied threefold. First, there are no guiding procedures to support policy recommendations for parent involvement. Second, schools are expected to produce their own strategies to involve parents, without adequate knowledge and support. Third, while some parents may have the confidence to engage with the school, many are left on the periphery not understanding the rules of engagement (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012).

In recognition of these possibilities, the current research was undertaken to understand the state of parent involvement in the implementation of PBL and the universal strategies to support student academic and social behaviours. The collection of context-specific data from teachers, parents and students in two NSW DoE primary schools will provide insights into the approaches schools take to involving parents according to DoE policies, the literature and PBL documentation. The data will draw attention to the practices which these two schools employ to involve all parents, according to the literature and policies (see Chapters two & three). It is important to identify the reality of parental involvement in PBL and school more widely from the perspective of these stakeholders in education, as there is a paucity of Australian research in this area.

Although there are studies showing parents can have a positive influence on the behaviour and academic progress of their children (Coleman, 2013; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Monti et al., 2014; Semke et al., 2010) there are *no* Australian studies that show the nature and extent of parent involvement in PBL implementation, the

subsequent decision-making processes or the effect this involvement may have on student learning. The literature suggests a hierarchical framework to support parental involvement at varying levels to accommodate parent preferences. Collaboration and stakeholder theory (Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000) highlight the rights of all parties to be involved in problem-solving exercises that contribute to solutions for organisations (such as schools). Parents, as stakeholders, may not be aware of the opportunity to become involved decision-makers and contribute to the school in this way. If the data reflect this, then related issues impeding involvement and their perceived recommendations for improvement will be explored. While all stakeholders need not have the same objectives, according to Van Puyvelde, Caers, Du Bois and Jegers (2012) having opposing objectives impedes the ability to solve problems. Thus, clarification of how decisions are made within each school's PBL framework will contribute to an understanding of the role parents play as collaborative decision-makers.

Aims

The overarching aim of this research is to examine parent involvement in PBL implementation in two primary schools in South Western Sydney, to determine the extent to which parents are involved in the decision-making processes. Related to this key focus, the supplementary aims are to identify any issues with regard to parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely, and to ascertain any perspectives from the stakeholders to improve those circumstances.

In light of these aims, the following four research questions were posed, with sub questions framed with respect to the various stakeholders. The statement of each research question below is followed by a brief rationale which is based on the literature presented in Chapters two and three of this thesis.

Research Questions and their Rationale

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, parents and students regarding PBL?

It is important to gather teacher perspectives and understandings about PBL in their school, as their knowledge and actions are linked directly to those of the students and the parents. As noted in the literature review, Mathews et al., (2014) advise that it is important to instruct teachers on how to incorporate the key elements of PBL (see Chapter three) into their daily routines, to maintain a consistent approach for the students. The goals stated by the NSW DoE (NSW DET, 2006b) for the adoption of the school-wide PBL process refer to parents as active participants in decision-making processes and as sharing the educative responsibilities. It is therefore imperative that parent input be considered when implementing interventions and support for students in schools.

Students are not only the link between their parents and their teachers, but also the subject of the implementation of PBL. Without students' insights about PBL, a critical data component would be omitted, as the student links teacher and parental understandings about the rules and systems in place in the school. The literature explains that children have an educational advantage if the values of home and school align (Wegmann & Bowen, 2010) and that parents' values and beliefs influence the behaviour of the child (Kaur, 2010). Research Question 1 allows students to identify similarities and differences between the rules at home and those reinforced by PBL in school.

Understanding students' opinions about appropriate school and home rules may focus attention on the consensus between home and school in regard to the implementation of PBL. This question provides important knowledge into the stakeholder understandings of PBL and the effect of the systems and processes in place at the school.

Research Question 2

How do teachers and parents perceive parent involvement in PBL implementation and in school more widely?

This research question probes how teachers and parents understand parent involvement in PBL implementation and the procedures and strategies used by the school to involve parents. Involving parents in behavioural interventions that have an effect on children seems logical, and according to Vaughn et al., (2005) it is critical for positive outcomes. Involvement is interpreted differently depending on the circumstances surrounding the training and implementation of PBL. Involvement refers to communication that is reciprocal and acknowledged and not necessarily that which assumes a physical presence or face-to-face interaction. The data from this question will establish the perceptions of parent involvement from the perspectives of the teachers and the parents.

Research Question 2 seeks to establish the effect of parent involvement in PBL implementation processes from the perspectives of both teachers and parents. If we are concerned with involving parents more in school to benefit the outcomes for children, then understanding the factors that contribute to involvement and those that might be a barrier to it, are necessary.

Whereas the first research question gives parents the opportunity to reflect on the PBL system operating in their child's school, this question asks parents to articulate their role and involvement through the processes of implementation. The NSW PBL website (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au), suggests that parents become part of the school team to participate in decision-making processes. As parents' report their experiences, a comparison with the teacher data will suggest either corresponding features of parent involvement or that parents perceive their involvement differently to the teachers.

Research Question 3

What are the issues identified by the teachers, parents and students regarding parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely?

Teachers and parents both support and manage the children in their care. Interestingly, Hart (2010) and Walker (2009) suggest that applying consistent support and management strategies across home and school provides the child with stable responses to their behaviour. In addition, Kim and Page (2013) and Valdez et al., (2005) inform us that methods of parenting impact on children's social, emotional and academic performance and therefore influence their learning and behaviour at school. As teachers reflect on their support and management of the children and their interactions with the parents, concerns may be raised. These data will offer insights about the issues and recommendations surrounding the reciprocal responsibility for supporting, managing and educating children as stated in various NSW DoE policies and reported in the literature review.

According to Janssens and Seynaeve (2000) parents are "low-power" stakeholders, and as such may need to build relationships, skills and confidence prior to engaging in more cooperative school activities. In addition, Henderson and Mapp (2002) say that it is a requirement to build trusting relationships in schools to support the needs of families. Research Question 3 seeks parents' views about issues surrounding involvement in PBL and in school more widely. Accordingly, their perspectives as to how or what might improve involvement will be explored. The expectation is that the data will provide a variety of key points, some positive and some negative about parent involvement in school, which can inform future guidelines for best practice.

If schools and policymakers see parents as significant contributors to the social and academic performance of students in school, then the parent voice on issues concerning involvement must be heard. Sanders (2003) supports this view by stating that involving parents is not only a participatory approach but may make schools stronger, support families and unite communities. Parent perspectives are relevant to their immediate needs and should be assessed regularly and changed accordingly to meet those needs. Thus, guidelines for best practice must include a cyclic component to addressing parent concerns.

Many researchers suggest that parents who are involved in supporting their children at school, as by helping with homework, reading or general discussions,

have children who show steady academic progress and fewer behaviour problems (Cooper & Cresnoe, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hattie, 2008; Jordan, 2014). Both teachers and parents have had the opportunity to discuss issues around parent involvement in school. Therefore, students now have the opportunity to elaborate on how the school might help them as students or their families with school-related issues. While it is not the intention of this question to establish specific family pressures, it may offer insights into how or what schools could provide to support parents in their role as parent and educator.

Research Question 4

> *What are the perspectives from teachers and parents to improve parent involvement in PBL and in schools more widely?*

School context is critical to this investigation as it will provide comparison data among participants within each school setting as well as between school settings. Do the schools have similar experiences concerning parent involvement in PBL? These data will provide critical understandings for the development of best practice guidelines for involving parents in PBL and in school more widely. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) interpreting the story "enables the user to explain and predict events, thereby providing guides to action" (p. 25). Thus, providing data on the similarities and differences between participant groups and schools creates a picture of the elements that may be widespread and those that may be exclusive to that particular setting.

Summary

The four research questions presented above are intended to afford insights into whether:

- the implementation of PBL is considered effective and valued by all stakeholders;
- parent involvement is perceived similarly by the teachers and the parents;

- any identified issues and recommendations could support new initiatives to encourage inclusive parent involvement; and
- any similarities between the settings could be indicative of generic considerations for intervention, and any differences an indication of the unique strategies needed to improve parent involvement in that particular context.

This chapter explained the significance of this investigation and presented the aims, the research questions and their rationales. The following chapter presents the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions outlined in this chapter. Subsequently, the findings will be presented, which answer the four research questions outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

> Qualitative research is "committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 7).

Introduction

The decisions made by school administrators and teachers are guided by educational policy. The examination of policy has significant implications for the meaning of parent involvement in school. The overarching aim of this study is to understand how schools that are involved in implementing PBL perceive parent involvement and how parents and students understand and experience such PBL involvement.

According to Matthews and Ross (2010) research must be planned thoughtfully and conducted carefully and critically, not just in the areas of data collection and analysis but also in its design and ethical considerations. Methodology refers to the personal approach taken by the researcher to create a design that will answer the research questions with integrity and provide results that are trustworthy. The research questions for this study were developed intentionally to support the aims of the project (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Trede & Higgs, 2009). This research study is framed around a world view of the individual that captures the understandings of teachers, parents and students about PBL and parent involvement.

This chapter will detail the methodology used to address the aims and answer the research questions presented in Chapter four. It will describe, with reference to the literature, the methods used for the sampling of case study schools and participants, the data collection and analysis, the ethical considerations. The ability of this study to generalise the findings will be addressed, followed by a summarising paragraph to conclude the chapter.

Qualitative Design

Schools are learning places, and professional places but they are also social places. Aside from the professional platform, teachers, students and parents interact at the social level on a daily basis. According to the literature, qualitative methods provide a way to research people in context which can deliver deep and meaningful understandings relevant to their experience (Miles & Huberman, 2002; Yin, 2016). This applies to the current research study which will investigate the perspectives of teachers, parents and students in their educational settings. Hays and Singh (2012) explain that:

> In educational disciplines, practitioners and educators interact daily with students, colleagues or administrators and encounter phenomena that need to be understood in context to guide our work as well as influence policy… qualitative inquiry is well suited to help bridge the gap between research and practice within [the educational] discipline. (pp. 4, 5).

As stated in the literature review (see Chapter two), both DoE and PBL goals assume that parents will participate and share with schools the responsibility for educating their children. This qualitative investigation probes the understandings and experiences of parents, teachers and students across two primary school settings, to comprehend how parent involvement strategies and long-standing assumptions about parent involvement relate to the everyday experiences of these stakeholders in the implementation of PBL. Kvale (1996) explains that the qualitative interview is designed to investigate the experiences of participants and that the semi-structured questioning technique guides by its design to evoke elaboration on themes (Miles & Huberman, 2002; Kvale, 1996). Hays and Singh (2012) suggest that early educational theory was guided by interviewing and "continues to be the preferred option for unexplored and underexplored social phenomena" (p. 237).

Although one might look to percentage values to support a particular view, it is not always the greater percentage that requires a supportive intervention. Often, in social research, the opposite is true with minorities being given a voice through the use of qualitative research techniques. For change to occur in social settings like schools, in-depth, detailed analysis of stakeholder data is required to understand the

web of underlying phenomena which may influence (in this case) parent involvement in PBL and school more widely, and the ways in which involvement strategies are enacted.

The further justification for the use of the qualitative approach becomes clearer through the words of Fontana and Frey (2000) who state that "interviewing is one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 645). If real benefit is to be gained through this research, then the experiences of the stakeholders need to be understood and practical approaches applied to promote parent involvement, should that be determined by the data. It is the responsibility of the researcher to choose methods that produce practical value and benefit those concerned (Angen, 2000). Given due consideration, a qualitative methodology was selected for this research and will be further explained throughout this chapter.

Interpretivist Paradigm

Marlow (2011) refers to a paradigm as a map, which makes clear the important problems to be solved, the acceptable theories to be explored and the methods needed to solve those problems. Although some may see the interpretation as subjective, a deep understanding of the ideas and issues around parent involvement is only possible through being willing to listen, thus giving the participants a voice and valuing the views of the respondents. Matthews and Ross (2010) explain the meaning of the interpretivist approach as:

- Qualitative data (rich in detail and description);
- Uncovering and working with subjective meanings;
- Interpretation of meaning within a specific context; and,
- Empathetic understanding, "standing in the other's shoes"

The interpretivist approach possesses the following features:

- Knowledge gathered includes people's interpretations and understandings.

- The main focus is on how people interpret the social world and social phenomena enabling different perspectives to be explored.
- The researcher is interpreting other people's interpretations in terms of the theories and concepts of the social researcher's discipline – studying the social phenomenon as if through the eyes of the people being researched.
- The researcher works with the data gathered to generate theory (p. 28).

Readers may critique the interpretation of the data as reflecting only the researcher's perspective. However, when the data from the focus groups, participant sets (teachers, parents, students) and artefacts are cross-referenced, a greater level of confidence in the interpretation is achieved. (This will be discussed in more detail in the later section "Triangulation and Bias".) According to Creswell (2012) and Miller and Glassner (2016) to describe the experiences of others is not the objective rather, the researcher's responsibility is to interpret the meaning embedded in the stories, and through rigorous interpretation enable that meaning to be understood. In this way, the researcher becomes the messenger through the voices of the participants.

According to Angon (2000) rigorous attention to cross-referencing reduces the risk of any ambiguity of meaning and is required for the validation of the research. Validity in qualitative research has drawn the attention of many researchers (Angon, 2000; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lub, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 2002). However, when multiple sources of information are brought to the analysis, a greater level of confidence and validation of the findings occurs (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blyth & Neville, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 2002). In qualitative research, interpretation leads to understanding which according to Miles and Huberman (2002) is the validity component of the research.

Case Study Design

Two Cases

A case study is both the process and the product of an inquiry and provides insight into an issue, facilitating understanding (Stake, 2005). This research comprises two case studies. Each case study follows an identical interview format for teachers, parents and students (see Appendix C). Artefacts examined from each school (case studies 1 and 2) will be matched and referenced to verify the data obtained from the interviews.

Parent knowledge of and involvement in PBL implementation is fundamental to this research. The insights provided here by teachers, parents and students may facilitate future ways of working with schools and parents, should that be what is required. Such efforts may increase the effectiveness and sustainability of PBL.

The recruitment of two case study schools was critical as a means of collecting the necessary data to address the study's aims and research questions. Collecting data from two case study schools may highlight some similarities and differences and provide an interpretation of those issues that may be generic to all schools with similar populations, and those that need individual attention. Having access to more than one site provides an important opportunity to obtain stakeholder insights and perspectives across school domains.

Matthews and Ross (2010) explain that "comparative research often uses a multiple case study design, allowing for in-depth study of each case, and aims to explain the similarities and differences between the cases" (p. 131). Given that education policy and goal statements acknowledge that parental involvement is important both in decision-making processes within schools, and for the positive academic achievement of students, understanding how schools approach this and how parents view their role is valuable for the future development of policy, procedures and strategies to encourage such involvement. The findings from each case study will provide important data with regard to parent involvement in PBL implementation and in school more widely.

Pseudonyms were applied to each case school with case study one being named “Westlee School” and case study two “Grayson School”.

Sampling and Participants

To achieve the aims of this study, a purposeful sampling procedure was adopted for school selection, as only schools that were currently involved in implementing PBL were suitable for inclusion in this study. According to Matthews and Ross (2010) purposeful sampling “cases are chosen with purpose to enable the researcher to explore the research questions [and are] selected on the basis of characteristics directly related to the researcher’s area of interest” (p. 167). In this case, the researcher was the regional PBL support person for the two schools that agreed to participate in this study, and thus had an interest in improving processes designed to support the successful academic and social performance of students now and into the future.

The participants were 14 teachers, 13 parents and 14 students in total. Table 3 indicates the split of participants between schools.

Table 3: Participants from each School

Grayson School	Westlee School
1 principal	1 principal
6 teachers	6 teachers
4 parents	9 parents
6 students	8 students

All the parent participants were female. Of the teachers, two were male and twelve female. Each group of students was an even mix of male and female. The teacher participants from each school had a range of teaching experience from two years to eighteen years and the principals had in excess of thirty years of experience each.

Stakeholder perspectives have been researched in alternative education settings (Swain-Bradway, Swoszowski, Boden & Sprague, 2013) as have coaches' perspectives on barriers to the implementation of universal interventions (Lohrmann, Martin & Patil, 2013). However, this is the first Australian study to investigate stakeholder perspectives on PBL and in particular parent involvement. Therefore, this research will contribute significant detail to knowledge of the areas of implementation and sustainability of PBL processes in schools in Australia and internationally.

Procedures

Once the principal of each school had accepted to be involved in the study, letters of invitation to participate in the study were sent to all teaching staff. The principal and six teachers from each school responded and were subsequently interviewed.

An invitation to participate was sent to the parents of all the students at each school (see Appendix B). These invitations included a section for parents to give permission for their child to be interviewed in a focus group situation. The invitations also gave parents the option to be interviewed individually (either face-to-face, or over the telephone) or in a group. As that method of recruitment proved unsuccessful, an alternative approach was taken. With the permission of the Principal, information about the study and a request for participation was placed in the school office areas, and thus visible to parents when they were visiting the office. Due to the low rate of parent and student responses, random sampling of respondents was not possible as the full quota of participants as set out in the ethics application was not achieved in either school. All invitations were written according to the ethical guidelines approved for the study.

Ethics

Ethical practice is concerned with respecting those involved in the research, and conducting oneself with integrity, professionalism and courtesy. As explained by Matthews and Ross (2010) it takes time and effort to be a good researcher, as one

must explain the project to obtain informed consent, and be clear about the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and that anonymity will be assured. Hays and Singh (2012) note that the role of ethics procedures as practices that educate researchers about sound ethical behaviour, means they are a tool for accountability and a guide to improve practice.

Ethics approval for this study was given by the University of Western Sydney (now Western Sydney University) after completion of the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) (Approval No. H9331) and then the DEC through the State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) (Approval No. 2011137).

The NEAF and SERAP procedures were followed for this study with the process explained again prior to each interview or focus group, to ensure the conditions of participation were understood and accepted.

Data Collection

All participants were interviewed and all the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim prior to analysis.

The schools were identified as "G" Grayson and "W" Westlee. Teachers were identified with a "T" and a number following the school identifier thus, GT1 (for Grayson Teacher 1) to GT7 or WT1 (for Westlee Teacher 1) to WT7.

Parents were identified with a "P" and a number following the school identifier thus, GP1 (for Grayson Parent 1) or WP1 (for Westlee Parent 1). Where parents were interviewed in a focus group, an interview identification tag "WP3" (Westlee Parent interview 3 - group of 5 parents) was allocated and each parent numbered as "V1" (voice 1) as they spoke when the interview was transcribed.

One focus group of six students participated from Grayson School and two focus groups of four students each participated from Westlee School. As only one group of students participated from Grayson School the group was identified as "GSF" (Grayson Student Focus). The two student focus groups from Westlee used the school identifier followed by a number (WSF1 or WSF2). Student's individual

voices were identified as “V1”, “V2” as they spoke when the interview was transcribed.

Aside from the individual and focus group interviews, data were also collected in the form of artefacts which related to the implementation of PBL and to parental involvement in those processes. The following artefacts were planned to be collected and examined, however not all documents were available from each school (see Table 12). All artefacts were obtained from the school with permission from the Principal and support from the administrative staff.

- school plans;
- meeting minutes for the PBL team, general staff and the parents and citizens association (P&C);
- newsletters; and;
- school welfare and discipline policies.

Overview of the Interview Process

A predetermined place and time for the interviews was negotiated with each individual teacher. For the parent and student interviews however, the principal of each school allocated a specific room within the school in which these would take place. Principals were interviewed in their offices. Following each interview the researcher made field notes to document aspects of the interview that were not captured by the audio recorded data, such as the participant’s emotion or enthusiasm when responding to different questions. The taking of field notes supports a better understanding of the participants and the context in which they operate (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Although there was a schedule of questions for each category of participant (see Appendix C), the interviews followed a semi-structured format with the researcher posing additional questions to extend the ideas, knowledge and understandings obtained from the respondents. This type of interview strategy gives a rich picture and a deeper understanding of the phenomena being explored and has the advantage of developing themes that might otherwise go undetected (Hays &

Singh, 2012). The interview questions were not given to participants prior to the interview, so the researcher could obtain the participants' immediate responses. Reflective listening and further prompt questions could then be employed to elicit deeper understandings from the initial response.

For the question related to local services (Appendix C question 5) a prompt sheet listing available local services was given to the participants to help them understand what was required. This supported the dialogue without creating a response theme. Each respondent could then address only the services they felt were relevant for their individual circumstances or that their school community would benefit from. Each respondent was given the opportunity to answer fully, with the interviewer probing for elaboration when necessary. Active listening techniques were used throughout all the interviews to acknowledge understanding and to elicit further comment. For example: "When you said the rules were useful everywhere, do you mean they are helpful just at home, or are they helpful in other places as well?" Such reflection and further questioning by the researcher prompted more detailed responses, providing greater insight into the issue raised. During this process each participant had the opportunity to confirm their statements or clarify their meaning (Bambara & Nonnemacher, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 2002; Miller & Glassner, 2016). All interviews ended with the interviewer recapping the issues discussed and offering a final opportunity for the participant(s) to elaborate on any aspect of the interview.

Focus Group Discussions

The focus group interviews were conducted using the same active listening techniques as described above. The focus group method of data collection was deliberately chosen for the student interviews. Conducting individual interviews with the students was deemed to be inappropriate as singularly they may have felt intimidated by an unknown adult and therefore not answer the questions confidently. Three student focus groups were conducted during the data gathering phase. One focus group of six students was conducted at Grayson, and two focus groups of four students each were conducted at Westlee. A group situation is more socially oriented and may encourage students to engage with each other in conversation about the

topic questioned (Hays & Singh, 2012) leading to more detailed responses (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Although the aim of this research was to investigate parent involvement in PBL, it was important to establish the understandings that students and their parents had of PBL systems and processes. As stated in the literature review (see Chapter two), children whose parents support school policies and processes show more positive social and academic progress. The focus groups were a way to stimulate discussion about the PBL rules and the connection between the systems at school (regarding academic and social support) and the home.

While the parents at Grayson all engaged in individual interviews, some parents at Westlee preferred to be interviewed in a focus group situation. One focus group of five parents and another of two parents were interviewed at Westlee. It was important to give the parent participants a choice to be interviewed in this way, as it allowed parents to feel supported through the interview process. During these interviews, the researcher took on the role of facilitator by keeping the conversations on topic, probing for further information and posing questions directly to those participants who were more likely to agree with others rather than provide their own perceptions.

Triangulation and Bias

Triangulation is defined as the use of two or more data collection methods to improve the validity of a study (Burns, 2000; Carter et al., 2014; Miles & Huberman, 2002). Using both individual and focus group methods of interviewing participants is considered to be a form of triangulation. As suggested by Hays and Singh (2012) and Carter et al., (2014) a combination of interview methods often provides a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon than one method alone. In this study, as noted earlier in the chapter, school policies and other forms of school documentation were examined chronologically, first to note the intention to involve parents in decision-making processes and subsequently to note the information made available for stakeholder approval. As a consequence of this process, parental involvement (or perceived involvement) may be scrutinised by analysing school

documented procedures together with parent, teacher and student recollections of what the involvement looked like and, if deemed necessary, how it can be improved. The decision to examine school artefacts was made with the intention of reducing the bias that a single researcher's perception alone may create. Researcher interpretations may be susceptible to initial impressions of the data, cross-referencing those interpretations with the artefacts demonstrates a greater level of credibility and validation of the findings (Burns, 2000; Carter et al., 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 2002). Such procedures help prevent a biased position from forming as one data set may share a different view of a previously assumed perception.

A procedure for identifying potential researcher bias is to administer the interview questions to a similar sample population before conducting the interviews. This was done with a small sample population of teachers, parents and students from a school located in a different geographical region from those in the study. The researcher requested a group of six peers to evaluate and give feedback on the draft interview questions. Minor changes were made after this feedback was received and this pilot exercise formed a critical part of establishing the rigour of the research instruments.

The use of multiple sources of data is described by Carter et al., (2014) as "data source triangulation" that adds to the validation of the study. Validity refers to how clearly the instruments generate data that answers the questions at hand. When teachers and parents were asked to identify services or resources that may provide support, their responses were varied. However, the variation is not a reflection of non-valid methods rather it is an indication of the variety of stakeholder perceptions of community needs, and essential to the gathering of context-specific data.

Data Analysis

The researcher's intention was to analyse the data from each participant group, then compare that data to establish which elements were shared by the settings and which were unique. This information was critical to enable the investigation to assess whether each school holds similar perceptions regarding

parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely. Without this information, the preparation of best practice guidelines for involving parents in school would lack the flexibility required for schools to address issues idiosyncratic to their context.

Data analysis in qualitative research is a process that categorises information into themes, and interprets and synthesises meaning from that data (Wiersma, 2005). All the interviews from each participant or groups of participants were transcribed by the researcher, verbatim, and coding progressed through a series of phases. There are three phases of the coding process according to Strauss and Corbin (1998); open, axial and selective. Open coding is the first stage of generating recurring themes from the data. Axial coding is the development of categories and subcategories. At the selective coding stage the process is refined to interpret and apply meaning to answer the research question(s). Supportive of this decision was reference to a study by Taliaferro, DeCuri-Gunby and Eckard (2009) about parent perceptions of involvement, which described the analysis of semi-structured interview data as inductive. This approach reflects patterns in the participants' responses whereby themes are developed, similarities and differences are identified and relationships are connected to research and literature.

Analysis began by reading two of the teacher and parent transcripts in their entirety. This enabled the researcher to examine the content to assemble a broad understanding of specific themes, concepts, ideas or opinions that recurred in the data. Notes were made in the margins of each transcript and compared for similarities, the open coding phase. As data collection progressed, analysis continued and so became a dynamic process which evolved as the project continued. After the initial transcript readings and note taking, NVivo 10 (QSR International Pty Ltd, n.d.) software was used to organise the data. NVivo software is designed to support the organisation of qualitative information from multiple sources. It allowed the researcher to generate nodes (category nominators) under which sub themes were listed to produce data trees. This enabled the researcher to code similar ideas, text and opinions at a specific node, and then dissect those data into more succinct and meaningful subcategories. For example, "child care" could raise issues of cost, accessibility or establishment of a formal or informal service that allows parent participation in school programs and the work force.

Themes emerged from the text through identifying similar use of terms, such as “safe, respectful, learner” with reference to the school rules or “we are on the same page” meaning teachers were consistent with their practices. This data collection pattern was repeated with each participant transcript to gather information to answer each of the research questions. The artefacts from each school were also analysed in this way using NVivo software to allocate relevant data to the appropriate node. This process was very time efficient and ensured that data was stored in the correct place for easy retrieval.

NVivo software facilitated a process of reductive coding which reduced the data to five main categories (see Table 8). Tables 4 - 7 provide examples of how this process unfolded. These main categories hold the specific data to answer the four research questions posed to understand the scope of parent involvement in PBL, in the schools more widely and to address any issues or perspectives for improvement that arose from the data.

Table 4: Example of Reductive Coding Procedure - RQ 1

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, students and parents regarding PBL?	
Open coding process	
# *∆ Safe, respectful, learner # Staff training # * Parent newsletter # Student data collection # Speaking the same language # * ∆ Rewards and consequences # * ∆ Keeping things consistent *It's not conflicted between school and home *I use a reward chart at home ∆ Rules are good you know what you're doing	Initial reading of the first two transcripts from the teachers and parents highlighted common words and phrases related to first research question to enable category generation. Student data were added later following the focus group interviews. As coding progressed, text was added under the appropriate participant 'selective' category for each case study
Axial coding process	
School rules Teacher training Parent understanding Strategies for teaching students Rules related to parents' values Consistency for students (rules / values)	Collating words and phrases under themes or subcategories (nodes). Eg: safe, respectful, learner; rewards and consequences, and; rules are good…, were collated under the subcategory of 'school rules'. The teachers, parents and students had their data allocated separately so as to distinguish between each set of participants
Selective coding process	
Rules Understanding PBL Consistent strategies for parents and teachers	Refining codes to succinct category nodes. Eg: parent understanding of PBL came from newsletters (and other sources); teacher understanding came from training (and PBL team sharing data); student understanding came from teaching the rule expectations
Knowing PBL	Main category node with subcategories under from each set of participants for each case study formed the 'data tree'

Note. # = teachers; * = parents; ∆ = students.

Table 5: Example of Reductive Coding Procedure - RQ 2

Research Question 2: How do teachers and parents perceive parent involvement in PBL implementation and school more widely?	
Open coding process	
# Parents were involved every step of the way # I talk to them about PBL # PBL is explained at orientation * No it was already set * Not really I am new to the school * No. We attend meetings but PBL, no * No this is my first year here + need to increase parent involvement + parents invited to the PBL launch + Parents invited to information sessions	Initial reading of the first two transcripts from the teachers and parents highlighted common words and phrases related to the second research question to enable category generation. As coding progressed, text from interviews and artefacts were added to NVivo under the appropriate participant "selective" category according to the case study. Memos were recorded against some entries, indicating that further investigation was needed about that data point.
Axial coding process	
No involvement of parents Some parents new to the school Parents were – informed Parents were – invited Parents are "on board" – valued PBL	Coding for parents – no for each case. Memo – have new parents been asked to respond to PBL processes? Memo – Involved / informed – what does the literature say? Memo – How did teachers determine that parents were "on board"…is this evidence based?
Selective coding process	
Parents – no involvement Teachers – parents informed (not involved)	Refining codes to succinct category nodes. Subcategories under Teachers: parents were informed through newsletters, orientation days, assemblies, casually talking to teachers.
Parent involvement	Main category node with subcategories under each set of participants from each case study school formed the 'data tree'

Note. # = teachers; * = parents; + = students.

Table 6: Example of Reductive Coding Procedure - RQ 3

Research Question 3: What are the issues identified by teachers, parents and students regarding parent involvement in PBL and school more widely?	
Open coding process	
# The only time parents are spoken to is when their child has done something wrong # Sometimes the children are the ones who speak English # A negative relationship means you distance yourself # Building trust is a big thing * Parents feel intimidated if they don't speak English * Some parents lack confidence * Some people come from different backgrounds, they don't know how to get help * I feel embarrassed to talk to the teachers	Initial reading of the first two transcripts from the teachers and parents highlighted common words and phrases related to the third research question to enable category generation. As coding progressed, text from interviews were added to NVivo under the appropriate participant 'selective' category according to the case study. Memos were recorded against some entries indicating that further investigation was needed about that data point.
Axial coding process	
English proficiency Negative relationships Building trust Parent self-efficacy Cultural differences Support for parents in the local community	Coding for parents – links to language, relationships, trust and support Memo – What is the impact of language / cultural differences on involvement practices?? Memo – Trust in relationships – look to the literature Memo – How do teachers support parents with these issues? What do teachers need?
Selective coding process	
English proficiency – communication barrier to relationships Trust and difference – barrier to communication and relationships Parent lack of self-efficacy – barrier	Refining codes to succinct category nodes Subcategories under Teachers: parents were informed through newsletters, orientation days, assemblies, casually talking to teachers
Communication and relationships between parents and teachers Barriers to parent involvement	Two main category nodes with subcategories under for teachers and parents from each case study formed the "data tree". Teachers: English proficiency; child care. Parents: Confidence; child care; language barrier

Note. # = teachers; * = parents.

Table 7: Example of Reductive Coding Procedure - RQ 4

Research Question 4: What are the perspectives from teachers and parents to improve parent involvement in PBL and in schools more widely?	
Open coding process	
# I assumed there was a service out there guiding parents # Parents may not have the skills (English/education) to help their children # The idea is to work together, home and school # Kindergarten parents are the most excited, that's the time to get them in * Some parents are hesitant, not confident * Who will look after my kids, child care is too expensive * Some parents will not approach the school, their culture is different * The school could be like a guide…to discuss different topics…that could bring teachers and parents closer together	Initial reading of the first two transcripts from the teachers and parents highlighted common words and phrases related to the forth research question to enable category generation. As coding progressed, text from interviews were added to NVivo under the appropriate participant 'selective' category according to the case study. Memos were recorded against some entries indicating that further investigation was needed about that data point
Axial coding process	
Parent confidence to be involved /self-efficacy Parent skills Work together Child care / time Learning together – school readiness, local facilities	Coding for parents – links to language, confidence, skill development Memo – How do schools build parent skill and self-efficacy – Literature? Memo – What is the impact of time and child care on involvement? Memo – What programs have successfully engaged parents? HOW?
Selective coding process	
Teacher wants and needs Parent wants and needs	Refining codes to succinct category nodes Subcategories under Teachers: knowledge of local services; professional learning (from literature); better relationships with parents Parents: better relationships with teachers, more time for discussion
Perspectives to improve parent involvement	Main category node with subcategories under for teachers and parents from each case study formed the 'data tree' on perspectives for improvement

Note. # = teachers; * = parents.

Table 8: Relationship of Main Categories to Research Questions

Research questions	Five main analytical categories
What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, parents and students regarding PBL?	• Knowing PBL
How do teachers and parents perceive parent involvement in PBL implementation and school more widely?	• Parent involvement
What are the issues identified by teachers and parents regarding parent involvement in PBL and school more widely?	• Communication and relationships between teachers and parents • Barriers to parent involvement
What are the perspectives from teachers and parents to improve parent involvement in PBL and schools more widely?	• Perspectives to improve parent involvement

The analysis of the artefacts began by linking wording in the documents to the categories or subcategories created from the analysis of the interview data. It became obvious that the artefacts highlighted two main themes which linked successfully with the aim of the study. These themes were "reference to PBL" and "reference to parents". These data were then matched with the first two main categories, "knowing PBL" and "parent involvement", across the two case study schools. This technique of using multiple forms of data collection, referred to as triangulation, "prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions" (Burns, 2000, p. 419).

In this way, the data trees helped the development of categories and subcategories to build a picture around each of the research questions. Pictures however, encourage conversation and interpretation; a true understanding of what the data mean is interpreted by the researcher, the software merely facilitating this process. Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, (2008) recognised this when they said that computer packages can help the researcher manage qualitative data by retrieving text and locating words and phrases to support one's understanding of

phenomena, and so NVivo 10 became the data management tool which facilitated the logical allocation of text to a particular category or subcategory.

Literature

Throughout this investigation current literature was consistently sought to understand or justify a particular concept or perspective highlighted by the process analysis and by the writing of this thesis. This constant reflection process assisted the researcher in consolidating the themes and categories drawn from the data. Additionally, the persistent interaction with the literature supported the researcher's ideas and actions when a new direction to promote parent involvement in schools was considered. The literature review provided a solid foundation for this work both theoretically and practically with regard to student academic and social behaviour, PBL and parent involvement in school.

The Research Journal

The task of undertaking research was both daunting and invigorating. To limit the fear and encourage the enthusiasm to enter the unknown, a research journal was begun. Initially, the journal attracted web-sites, colleagues' contact details, suggested readings and some useless paraphernalia. However, as the real work began, this book and the researcher became inseparable working companions. Most pages are dated and filled with the thoughts and actions of a particular moment in time. For example, a question: "What is the significance of parent involvement?" and a list of theories: "Attachment / Behaviour / Learning". Diagrams appear on some of the pages where thoughts had become illustrations or mind maps, as ideas were assembled and disassembled until some clarity prevailed. The journal also shows details of my thoughts post individual or focus group interviews, the field notes written in the car while still in the parking lot. These, together with the transcribed data, add to the deeper meaning that comes from having your voice heard with purpose.

The journal has been both a torment and a source of comfort; when all felt hopeless, the journal often pointed a way forward. The journal is the historical record of my doctoral journey, and this thesis the conclusion.

Generalisability

Generalisability refers to how relevant the findings are to a much wider population or a different context. In qualitative studies, generalisability is not usually anticipated because the research is conducted in specific contexts with, often, distinctive populations (Leung, 2015). This thesis is primarily concerned with understanding parent involvement in PBL and more widely, within two school populations, to identify the connection between the policy intent of parent involvement and the processes schools employ to encourage it. While the findings may be seen as specific to these two schools, a degree of generalisability may come through further research and meta-analyses about parent involvement in PBL and more widely within schools in Australia to address issues that are recognised as recurring across school contexts. Matthews and Ross (2010) state, "It is important to recognise that small scale research can still have value [and] that findings from one context can say something about another context" (p. 13).

Summary

This chapter highlighted the researcher's methodological considerations. Extensive reading has justified the overall methodological approach taken, the use of an interpretivist paradigm and the methods of data collection.

The next chapter provides the context for the two case study schools. This has been separated from the methodology chapter for ease of reference. However, it is acknowledged that the context of each case study school provides essential data which is integral to the interpretive, qualitative design that has been set out in this methodology chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS: THE CONTEXTS OF WESTLEE AND GRAYSON

Introduction

As pointed out in the literature review, young children develop understandings from consistently applied approaches to learning and discipline (Ainsworth, 1979; Fox et al., 2012; Hart, 2010). Children also learn how to respond to situations from the reactions of adults and peers with whom they have a connection. From birth to age five it is the family who teaches the child responses to the learning and discipline approaches they apply. From the compulsory schooling age teachers add to the expanding social network of the child. To support a consistent approach to student welfare, discipline and learning within the school setting, Westlee and Grayson schools elected to adopt the PBL model. Although these schools used the same PBL framework to construct a consistent school-wide approach, it was adapted to suit their unique contexts.

According to the Bureau of Statistics (Retrieved November 18, 2017 from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Data%20Summary~30), Sydney, NSW is the most popular geographic area for people migrating to Australia. As a result of this, the communities from which Westlee and Grayson drew their student populations were CALD. Specific contextual information about each of the case study schools was retrieved from their school websites. Other relevant information included herewith, for example the mobility of the staff and student populations, was gathered from discussions with the Principal from each of the schools.

Case Study 1 – Westlee School

At the time this research was conducted, Westlee School had approximately 720 students across classes from Kindergarten to Year 6 and 48 staff in teaching, executive and part-time counsellor roles. As with many government public schools, Westlee experienced annual teaching staff changes, and casual teacher replacements on a regular basis. When the research study began in 2010 the school had been implementing PBL over a period of three years and had been assisted by an external coach who supported the PBL team by collecting annual data to assist with forward planning.

Ninety-five percent of the Westlee student population spoke a language other than English with some sixty different languages spoken throughout the student population (Retrieved June 3, 2011 from school website). Westlee school had a CALD community. The majority of students walked to school from apartments located in close proximity to it. Many families associated with the school relocated to other modes of accommodation which resulted in a high rate of student replacement; this had been a trend over the past few years.

In a building on the school premises a church group held a playgroup on two days each week, with some of the local mothers attending these sessions with their young children. The school held Kindergarten orientation sessions in term four for the parents and students beginning school the following year. Assemblies for the whole school community were held every Monday morning and parent–teacher interviews were held twice per year. The school hall was not available for community activities after school and no P&C operated during the time this research study was conducted.

Parents were discouraged from talking to teachers after the morning bell marking the start of lessons, as this interfered with learning time, but they were encouraged to make appointments with teachers to discuss issues at a mutually agreed time. In addition, Westlee had initiated “parent conferences” which, unlike parent–teacher interviews, were informal and discussed the child’s likes, play preferences, home routines and any issues the family wanted to share. This was done

in part to develop a better understanding of the child but also to encourage better parent–teacher relationships.

The Principal was involved in various school committees, including the PBL team as chairperson, and when approached to participate in this study was enthusiastic, as was the staff. Two of the parents were also keen to contribute, and these two parents encouraged others to participate in the research focus group discussions.

At Westlee School, six teachers and the Principal participated in individual interviews. For this study, individual interviews were conducted with two volunteer parents. There were two focus groups, one consisting of five parents and the other of two parents. The two student focus groups each comprised four students. From Westlee School nine parents, eight students, six teachers and the Principal volunteered to participate in the study. All the interviews were conducted on school premises and each took approximately forty-five minutes to complete.

Case Study 2 – Grayson School

Grayson School, at the time this research was being conducted, had approximately four hundred and twenty students in total across classes from Kindergarten to Year 6, and 34 staff in teacher, executive and counsellor roles. Eighty percent of the student population spoke another language other than English with approximately forty different languages being spoken throughout the student population. Thus, the Grayson school community was CALD.

The majority of students walked to school from close by in single and double-storey home style accommodation. Some students were transported by bus to and from school and to and from before-and-after-school care facilities. Grayson School engaged with the PBL process to align with the local high school which was implementing PBL and thereby maintain a consistent approach when students transition from primary to high school. Grayson School was working through its first year of PBL when this research commenced in 2010. The school was supported by an external coach who assisted with initial data collection to plan for the implementation of school rules and teaching strategies appropriate for their context.

Weekly assemblies were held in the school hall and parent-teacher interviews were held at the end of term two. Additional parent-teacher meetings could be arranged with the teacher at mutually agreed times throughout the year.

The local council operated a preschool in one of the school buildings from Monday to Thursday each school week. The curriculum focus was school readiness with the preschool children attending Grayson assemblies and some special school events, such as the Easter hat parade, throughout the year.

The Principal was involved in various school committees, including as chairperson of the PBL team. The staff and principal were eager to be involved in the research study however, only four parents volunteered to be interviewed even though a variety of options and times were available to them.

At Grayson School, six teachers and the Principal participated in individual interviews. For this study, individual interviews were conducted with four parents. One focus group of six students completed the interview schedule. All interviews were conducted on school premises and each took approximately forty-five minutes to complete. In total, four parents, six students, six teachers and the Principal volunteered to be interviewed from Grayson School.

Summary

The contexts of both case study schools are summarised in Table 9. Information regarding historical patterns of parent involvement at each school was unavailable because of the lack of documentation from previous Parents and Citizen's groups. It is important to understand the current context of each school in order to compare the data for similarities and make connections to the literature, which together strengthen the findings detailed in the next two chapters.

Table 9: School Contexts

Context	Case 1 Westlee	Case 2 Grayson
No. students	720	420
No. staff	48	34
Preschool facilities	Playgroup 2 days	Preschool 4 days
P & C	None	Existing
Implemented PBL	3 years	1 year
% of students speaking another language	95%	80%
No. of languages spoken	60	40
Counsellor days	3	2

The most significant difference between the case study schools which may affect the findings is the length of time that the stakeholders had been influenced by PBL in their school. Nevertheless, the stakeholders who participated in this study, regardless of the time-frame difference, held similar views about parent involvement in PBL and in their school more widely.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS:
PBL – STAKEHOLDER KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND INVOLVEMENT

> If you see someone doing something and say, is that being respectful or is that being safe, are you being a learner…everything will come back to what PBL is trying to teach (Case 1 Teacher).

Introduction

The primary purpose of this research study was to examine parent involvement in the PBL implementation process in two primary schools in South Western Sydney. Although the investigation was focused on PBL implementation, factors that shaped parent involvement more widely in schools also emerged from the data. Given the importance of parent involvement, previously stated to support the academic and social development of children, understanding the multiplicity of that involvement is crucial.

The coding process as described in Chapter five resulted in the emergence of five analytical categories. This chapter will present data from two of those analytical categories: "knowing PBL" and "parent involvement". The voice of the stakeholder teachers, students and parents, together with evidence from the artefacts obtained from each school as described in Chapter 5, is interwoven throughout this chapter about parent involvement in PBL implementation and in Westlee and Grayson schools more widely.

Aspects that enhance parent participation, engagement, involvement and collaboration have been researched extensively (Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Epstein, 2005a; Ferlazzo, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2012; Sanders, 2003) with some studies critical of teacher attitudes toward parents (Minke & Anderson, 2005; Sander et al., 2010). This critique outlines the importance of the current study to interpret

stakeholder perspectives about parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely.

Positive Behaviour for Learning, education literature and school policies all refer to schools working together with parents to encourage better social and academic outcomes for children. For example, "when schools and families work together toward a common goal of helping all children and young people to be successful, it is much more likely to happen" (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au). How do schools and parents interpret "working together"? Are participation, involvement, engagement and collaboration "working together"? Is the provision of information to parents considered as involving, engaging, collaborating and working with them? Findings from the data in this study indicate a misunderstanding of the term "involvement" particularly in relation to PBL implementation.

During the interviews, participants were initially asked about their knowledge and understandings of PBL in their school. Next, parents and teachers were asked about parent involvement in PBL implementation and subsequent interventions. Identification of what teachers, students and parents knew PBL to be and the impact it has had on these stakeholders was an important foundation for this study. Parents are integral to student success (Coleman, 2013; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Monti et al., 2014) and implementation fidelity is important to the success of PBL interventions (Simonsen et al., 2012). Therefore, identifying what stakeholders understand about PBL is central to the aim of this study (see Chapter four).

Knowing PBL

Data under this first analytical category of "knowing PBL" responds to Research Question 1: What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, parents and students regarding PBL?

The interview data, for each set of stakeholders presented initial themes around PBL rules, being taught the expected behaviours that relate to those rules and the consequences of compliance and noncompliance. These themes came together to form this main analytical category to which the subcategories "understanding PBL" and "consistency" were applied. Thus, "knowing PBL" refers to knowing of its

existence in the school and the basic school rules and consequences. "Understanding PBL" refers to being familiar with the processes of teaching the positive behaviours associated with those rules.

Understanding PBL

As discussed in Chapter three, PBL is a school-wide systems approach to teaching appropriate behaviour. This preventative approach uses individual student data from school records on which the teaching and acknowledging of the behaviour-based rules are established.

The analysis of the teacher data found that understandings about the PBL preventative approach was acquired differently for teachers depending on whether they had been a part of the PBL team and how long they had been at the school. Regional personnel provided training for a core group of teachers from Westlee and Grayson to assist their schools through the processes leading up to implementation. Ongoing regional support was available to the PBL team on a regular basis. The teachers, who had received the training, acquired an in-depth knowledge about the PBIS framework (see Chapter three) and how decisions are driven by school data. They recognised, however, that their knowledge needed to be shared with other teachers. They noted that teacher changes within the PBL team "has given other teachers the understanding of where this is all coming from and where we are heading" (WT4) and so this was one way by which understandings of PBL were developed among teachers. Teachers who were new to their school learnt about PBL through "refresher" sessions and by teaching the "rule of the week" using support materials provided by the PBL team. The "refresher" sessions were conducted after school by the principal and supporting PBL team members, as noted in the staff meeting minutes.

School excellence plans, (a departmental requirement which measures school improvement over a three-year planning cycle) (www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/administrative/general/schoolexcellence/PD20160468.shtml), staff meeting minutes and PBL team meeting minutes from both schools, confirmed that staff had been sent off site to be trained in understanding and

implementing PBL processes. They also confirmed that a PBL team had been established, and that school behaviour data had been collected and collated to drive decisions from which rules and teaching materials were created and shared with the staff. The schools each developed three school rules. One school elected to have "be safe, be respectful and be a learner". The other chose "be safe, be respectful and be an active learner". It is not unusual for schools to have the same rules or rules that are very similar. School newsletters published these rules and the school welfare and discipline policies explained the rules which parents were expected to support.

Knowing that rules are an important first step to implementing positive behaviour, all the teachers interviewed recounted the school rules and confirmed that they were "being taught specifically and explicitly" (GT4) to students. The teachers explicitly taught expected positive behaviour and rewarded students when those were displayed in particular circumstances. All the teachers supported PBL in their school, saying that, "we all have the same understanding, the same expectations" (WT4). The PBL system had provided staff with a set of predictable and consistent responses to student behaviour. For example, a teacher may ask a student "Are you being safe?" and the student may then explain what they were doing and what they should do to be safe in that situation according to the behavioural responses which were taught.

The student participants from both schools were not hesitant to recite the PBL school rules which they had been taught. One student from Westlee added that the rules "make a big difference because [without them] everything would be all over the place", and a student from Grayson responded with "[the rules] teach you manners". Students indicated that their parents were familiar with the rules, saying that "parents know about them [the rules]…if you don't break the rules parents are happy" (WSF-1 – V2). The students said that parents liked the reward certificates that they received when they followed the rules and understood that a consequence would follow if the rules were broken. "Mum and Dad would get upset if I broke the rules" (GSF – V1), because, for a serious breach of the rules, a student would be given a detention or receive a letter to take home. This letter informed parents of the rule breach and the consequence, and in some cases requested a meeting with the parents.

The parent participants from both schools were familiar with the school rules to be safe, be respectful and be a learner. However, their knowledge and understanding about PBL and the rules came from a number of different sources. One mother explained that her children had told her about the school's rules, while others mentioned assembly announcements, Kindergarten orientation days, newsletters or the merit certificates that their children brought home. Although some parents received information about PBL through a variety of ways, the parents in this study valued the school's expectations for students to be safe, respectful, learners at school. One mother captured the essence of PBL by saying:

> Being a learner they will try to listen, being respectful we care for others, not self-minded, and being safe it is not only good for them but good for everyone else as well (WP3).

Another parent gained a deeper understanding of the PBL rules and processes through volunteering in her child's classroom. She said, "when you read it you don't really understand, now that I am in the school I am aware of things" (WP1). This parent, through being in the classroom, had realised that the rules were being taught specifically and explicitly, and that positive behaviours were encouraged through reminders, praise and rewards.

Consistency

When coding responses under the category of "knowing PBL" it became apparent that, through explicitly teaching the behavioural expectations associated with the rules, staff at Westlee and Grayson used consistent language in response to the way students related to each other or responded to a particular situation. These responses reflected the wording in the rule matrix from which the teaching points were created and which each school staff member helped produce. The use of this consistent language is in accord with the statement, "when PBL is implemented well, staff deliver consistent responses to student learning and behaviour" (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au), and demonstrates the commitment with which each school approached implementation. As indicated in Chapter five, six teachers and the Principal were interviewed from each school. All commented on the consistency

with which staff taught expected behaviours and responded to student behaviours according to the agreed procedures (see Table 10).

Table 10: Teacher Reference to PBL Consistency

Westlee teacher comments	Grayson teacher comments
We had the rules, be respectful, be safe, be a learner put up on many walls around the school so that children and adults can see them (WT1).	[PBL] is to help students have something to visualise…be a learner, be safe, be respectful…they get these awards on the spot to reinforce the student (GT1).
[PBL] gave us a very universal language to communicate with each other because a lot of the time we weren't (WT2).	The rules are consistent across the whole school (GT2).
Everyone's on the same page, so we all have the same expectations (WT3).	It's something very visual and useful for everybody…the students know the expectations that we expect from them (GT3).
We are all speaking the same language, so we all had the same understanding, the same expectations (WT4).	It [rules, rewards, consequences] becomes more uniform because everyone is speaking the same sort of language (GT4).
The whole school was using a consistent language, consistent expectations (WT5).	[PBL gives] uniformity across all the classes just so we are all on the same page with our behaviour management (GT5).
It was introduced to get this common language, this common ground for everybody to participate in, so we all had the same school rules (WT6).	We [staff] saw that having three simple rules, safe, respectful, learner, covered basically everything we wanted [the children] to know (GT6).
There needed to be some really common language and some common structures across the school that everybody understood (WT7).	[PBL] has been a very successful initiative…every child…every teacher knows what safe, respectful, learner is all about (GT7).

Table 10 indicates that the teachers in both schools had developed a "common language" approach to explicitly teaching and reinforcing positive behaviours based on three simple but specific rules. One staff member summarised the experience of "consistency" this way:

> We are all speaking the same language, we all have the same understanding [and the students] are not stressed or confused from year to year [with different rules]. It's consistent across the whole school. (WT4).

Parents were asked for their views about having consistent rules at home and at school. The views of parents from Westlee and Grayson were similar to one another, with one parent summarising for all with:

> If they [children] don't have rules they are nowhere. They must have respect for anyone around them and play nicely. If they don't listen they need to face the consequences (WP1)

As a result of their understanding of PBL, a couple of parents from both schools had implemented behaviour strategies at home that reflected those of the school. For example, each school rewarded appropriate behaviour in a hierarchical way, where tokens or stamps accrued to gain a bronze, silver or gold level award. In the words of one mother:

> Once the school brought theirs in [PBL behaviour reward strategies] I thought, well that doesn't sound like a bad idea. At home I do the same thing. I have a reward chart for my kids so it can work properly, they won't get conflicted…same rules as the school (GP1).

Similarly, other parents considered it responsible to guide their children's behaviour academically by encouraging good study routines, and socially by teaching respect. The beliefs of these parents mirrored those of the school and align with those of Hattie (2008) who stated that parents who share the same beliefs as the school have an advantage over those who do not. The aim of this study was to examine parent involvement in PBL implementation, and not to address the advantage or disadvantage of parent belief systems in relation to school systems. However, it is interesting to note that the parents in this study shared a common understanding with the school in so far as teaching children to be safe, respectful and a learner not only at school but at home and out in their community. The notion of "consistency" in expectation and behaviour was shared between the school and these parents as a concept that should be applied across social contexts.

Although the students did not speak of consistency specifically, it may be inferred from student statements such as:

> They [the rules] make a big difference because [without them] everything would be all over the place (WSF-2-V3);

> You can be good on the playground and you can be good in your classroom (GSF-V3).

These statements reflect students' knowledge of the rules and that they are applied across the school in all situations. In general, the students from both schools understood the expectations of the school rules which aligned with consistent rewards and consequences for their behaviour.

Thus, in response to Research Question 1 all teacher, student and parent participants in this study knew their school rules and that rewards and consequences applied to the behaviours associated with those rules. They acknowledged that the behavioural expectations associated with the rules were explicitly taught as were the reward and consequence systems for being safe, respectful and a learner. All stakeholders acknowledged the importance of consistency through teaching and following through with praise and rewards or a reprimand at the appropriate time.

Consistency with regard to the PBL behavioural expectations, rewards and consequences, was viewed with mutual agreement from these stakeholders and seen to benefit children at school and in their broader social domains.

The next main analytical category determined how parents and teachers perceived parent involvement in PBL implementation in Westlee and Grayson.

Parent Involvement in PBL

The word "involvement", as mentioned previously, is often used interchangeably with "engagement", "participation", "collaboration" or "working together". This may confuse perceptions about what is meant by "involvement" in a given context. Therefore, it is important to understand how parents and teachers perceived parent involvement in the implementation of PBL and in school more widely.

The analysis of data which supports this second analytical category, "parent involvement in PBL", responds to Research Question 2: How do teachers and parents perceive parent involvement in PBL implementation and in school more widely?

This analytical category was determined from the specific wording of the research question. The two subcategories, "parent perceptions of their involvement" and "teacher perceptions of their involvement pertain specifically to the perceptions of the teachers and parents about parent involvement. However, parent involvement was perceived differently by the teachers and the parents.

Parent Perceptions of Their Involvement

The parents in this study recognised PBL practices as being beneficial for their children. The school PBL rules (be safe, be respectful and be a learner) reflected the expectations of these parents who desired their children to consider their safety and the safety of others; to be polite to family, friends and others; and to engage with the learning at school and with extra-curricular activities. However, although they agreed with the PBL systems and processes, the analysis confirmed that they had not been involved in PBL implementation decision-making processes.

Table 11 lists the responses from parents when asked: "Were you involved in or asked to contribute your ideas to the PBL process at your school?"

Table 11: Parent Contributions to PBL in their School

Westlee parent responses (individual and focus group responses)	Grayson parent responses (individual responses)
Not really, because I was new to the school I didn't know we could give our ideas and stuff (WP1).	No (GT1).
No, it was already set…I believe schools should have these set rules for children (WP2).	No, this is our first year here. It's been drilled by the teachers, that's great (GT2).
At orientation they explained briefly about this (WP3).	They got the parents meeting…my English limited… I don't go (GT3).
No no. We attend meetings…about Naplan, reading…PBL, no (WP4).	No. It was already in place…I thought it was great (GT4).

Although the responses in Table 11 establish that the parent participants had not been involved in or consulted about the initial implementation of PBL, two noteworthy points must be considered. First, some parents from each school stated

that PBL was already in place when their child began at the school and therefore accepted the system without question. If it is involvement we seek to improve then having a strategy to invite informed comment from these parents and those like them, would seem valuable to have in place. Second, a parent from Grayson was aware of meetings that took place at the school but due to her limited English skills she did not attend them. Westlee had a higher percentage of students with English as a second language (see Table 9) and so it may be assumed that the experience for parents there was similar to that of some parents at Grayson in relation to attending meetings. So what does limited English proficiency mean for parent involvement? This parent was comfortable to volunteer for this study and prepared to acknowledge her limited English skills. However, she did not feel comfortable to go to a meeting with school personnel and other parents to discuss school issues. Limited English skill is clearly of critical concern in relation to involvement in the participating schools. This, along with other barriers, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Data from PBL meetings and staff meeting minutes from both schools confirm that parents were not invited to and did not participate in the PBL implementation process. Comparable data from the artefacts show that a PBL team had been trained, student behaviour data had been collected and analysed, and systems had been established to teach the rule expectations and to reward or reprimand accordingly, before parents from either school were informed of these changes to school procedures. Table 12 displays data from the artefacts which corroborated that parents were offered invitations to the launch of PBL, and information about PBL, but were not involved in or contributed to the implementation processes in their school. According to the school plans and the minutes of the staff meetings and PBL team meetings, there is a willingness to achieve better parent involvement, and both schools' discipline and welfare policies aligned with research about the positive impact of parent–school partnerships on the developing child. According to this study, achieving parent involvement in the development of policies or new initiatives remains elusive and according to Garbacz et al., (2016) parent involvement is underemphasised in current systems and processes in schools.

Table 12: Artefact References to Parents and PBL

Artefact	Westlee	Grayson
School plans	Acknowledge a need to increase parent involvement [more widely]. Establish a parents and citizens association. Invite parents into classrooms. Promote parent engagement in PBL.	Overview of PBL shown to parents and citizens association.
Staff meeting and PBL meeting minutes	Invite parents to meeting to discuss the PBL matrix. PBL rules to be included in the newsletter. Parents could be provided with a "simpler" form of the matrix in student orientation packs.	Parents to be invited to PBL launch. Parents informed of the rule of the week. Talk about PBL rules at assemblies. PBL parent information note.
Newsletters	School evaluation surveys being sent home. Parents invited to [general] information sessions. Parenting tips included and information about a parenting class. Parents invited to an information session about PBL and policies. Invitation to Values Day inclusive of PBL.	Printed PBL rules [without any explanation]. Various invitations to curriculum learning sessions, PBL launch day and assemblies.
Policies PBL, welfare and discipline, anti-bullying	Policy states "parents play a vital role in the education of our children" and outlines their responsibilities in supporting the school. School discipline policy updated – parents invited to information session to explain the changes.	Policy states "Parents enter a partnership with the school based on shared responsibility". PBL behaviour levels, matrix and award system included in the policy. Parents will receive the explanation of behaviour levels when children are enrolled.

A parent from Westlee recalled a meeting to discuss the content of their school's PBL matrix (Appendix A), but had not been involved in any discussion

prior to this or since. Data from the artefacts demonstrate that parents were informed after staff had collected student data and integrated PBL systems and strategies. Two teachers from Grayson, who were also parents of children who attended that school, had knowledge of the PBL process and had input into the development of their rules and consequences. However, PBL was not shared with the wider parent body until after the basic framework had been developed and implemented when parents were invited to the PBL launch day at their school. As demonstrated by previous analysis, the parent participants' knowledge of the PBL rules and system had come from orientation to school sessions, assemblies, newsletters and their children. Although the parents in this study had not been involved in PBL implementation, they stressed that they approved of the rules and the idea of teaching positive behaviours because it supported their children's developing behaviour and prepared them to be safe and respectful out in the community.

Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement

In NSW prior to schools' committing to PBL implementation, a regional adviser informs the staff about the interconnection of the systems, data and processes that drives the decision-making towards targeted outcomes. Following this information session schools are expected to gauge the percentage of whole staff commitment to the change. If the commitment or "buy-in" is less than 80% then it is not recommended that the process begin.

The reason for this is twofold. First, if 80% of staff commit to implementing the school processes with fidelity then change is likely to occur, data should reflect more positive outcomes, and others will see the value in implementation and do the same (www.pbis.org). Second, if the majority of staff are pessimistic and do not commit to implementing strategies with consistency then the data will show less effective academic and social outcomes and reduce everyone's confidence in the system. Understanding the processes and being involved in making decisions and making a difference is what drives school staff to continue to follow PBL procedures. The cyclic process of data collection, thoughtful and consistent implementation of strategies, and evaluation of outcomes is the ongoing commitment that staff makes when they commit to PBL in their school. However, if it is critical to

the success of PBL to have an 80% commitment from all staff, it is unclear, considering the policy statements about parent participation, engagement and involvement, why parent commitment to the PBL system is not also assessed. Parent understanding and commitment to PBL is part of the "shared responsibility" for academic and social achievement stated in education policy (NSW DET 2006b).

The teachers from Westlee and Grayson felt that parents had been well informed about PBL in their school. In this study the analysis found that the parents had indeed been well informed about PBL, as verified by their contributions under "knowing PBL". However, there is a distinct difference between being involved and being informed.

Two points are salient. The first point is that receiving information supplied over time which develops knowledge and understanding, equates to being involved in the mechanisms which produced that knowledge and understanding. The second is that all parents agree with and affirm the content and processes of PBL in their schools. As one teacher said, "parents are thinking the same way as us" (WT1). The data show that parents approved of the rules that had been developed and the teaching of the rule expectations. However, there existed an element of assumption by the teachers, since parents were not engaged in targeted discussions about PBL, they were unable to dispel any assumption and highlight the reality about parent involvement. This study sought to discover the reality of parent involvement from the perspectives of teachers and the parents themselves.

Table 13 provides data from each of the teachers interviewed from Westlee and Grayson schools about how parents were involved in PBL implementation processes.

Table 13: Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in PBL

Westlee teacher comment	Grayson teacher comment
There are special signs, [displaying the rules] they're plastic and adults that come into the school can see them (WP1).	I don't know (GT1).
Parents have been involved when I have been talking to them directly about behaviours…and how we have responded to them in terms of safe, respectful, learner (WP2).	The launch day when parents were invited to attend and there was information sent home. I believe information was probably in the newsletter (GT2).
I think we are doing that [involving parents] better now through newsletters, open days and making sure parents are aware of what our expectations are (WP3).	Parents were involved on the launch day and they were given information on that day as well (GT3).
When we first started PBL parents were not involved. Parents attended [the matrix meeting] they listened but I don't think they were actually involved (WP4).	We actually had a couple of parents on staff…those parents gave a lot of input. We had the launch day and parents were involved. Parents were also aware through meet-the-teacher evenings (GT4).
When we first started PBL the staff and the students were involved in the creation of the matrix. [Later] we asked parents to come up [to the matrix meeting] (WP5).	It went to staff first. There were assembly announcements so parents knew it was coming and notes went home. Parents were invited to the launch day so they could know all about it (GT5).
[PBL] is explained at orientation. The community can see our posters hanging around the school. I think the parents, although they may not have been involved in the actual planning as such have been very much aware of its use and what we do with it at the school (WP6).	I think we did some surveys home to parents once it was implemented to see how much they knew about it. Parents were involved in the launch day and open days we had (GT6).
I actually presented it to the parents at a meeting and explained it to them and showed it to them (WP7).	Inviting parents to come up and be part of the launch day. It was brought up at P&C and newsletters would have gone home (GT7).

The data show that parents were informed in a variety of ways about PBL (as they themselves explained). However, the teachers clearly identified parent involvement as being invited to a meeting to be told about PBL or to the launch day, again to be informed. In addition, teachers referred to communication about PBL in newsletters, assemblies, PBL school signage and parent-teacher evenings in the

context of involvement. Compelling to the argument, two teachers from Westlee stated that parents were not actually involved, and the teachers from Grayson only made reference to the launch day as specifically linked to parent involvement with PBL.

Summary

Positive Behaviour for Learning is a positive prevention framework which uses local school data to drive decision-making about the most appropriate resources and strategies to support and improve the academic and social behaviour of students. The tiered structure of PBL allows for re-teaching of the universal strategies, and small group or individual teaching for students who require additional support. In developing the school-based systems and rules, teachers become action researchers as they create, apply and evaluate the strategies in a cyclic process. The students, in turn, learn the expected social and academic behaviours through explicit teaching. The safe, respectful and learner behaviour of students is thus shaped by the continual strategic responses of the school staff.

The teachers, parents and students who participated in this study valued PBL as a system for teaching expected behaviours based on being safe, being respectful and being a learner at school. The study found that all the stakeholders acknowledged and supported the consistency with which the PBL system operated in their school. The teacher data showed that the consistent language around PBL rules and strategies provided stability for the continued development of positive social and academic outcomes for students. At Westlee and Grayson, the teachers believed that the PBL rules aligned with the parents' beliefs about how their children should behave at school, at home and out in their community. The findings from both schools acknowledged that the students were rewarded for doing what was expected, and penalised, including with parent disapproval, if they broke those rules. The introduction of PBL influenced some parents to use similar behaviour management strategies at home such as a reward chart based on the home rules. The parent data also acknowledged that a consistent approach to academic and social behaviour promoted positive outcomes and benefited their children not just at school but at home and out in community settings.

Research Question 1asked: What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, parents and students regarding PBL? Teachers, students and parents were of the opinion that the rule-based concepts explicitly taught through PBL were of significant benefit to children throughout their developing years. Each participant group could relate the concepts being taught to wider social networks, and valued the consistent approach to teaching and developing safe, respectful and learner mind-sets within the students.

The aim of this study was to examine the nature of parent involvement in PBL implementation and in school more widely. The data demonstrate that the parents in this study were not involved in any PBL implementation decision-making activities. Although some parents were new to the schools and could not have contributed in this way, evidence was not produced through the artefacts or from the participants themselves, of any mechanism to enable parents to provide feedback on PBL practices and systems. Irrespective of this data, parents valued the school rules and the concepts being taught to their children. The parents in this study wanted their children to be safe, respectful and lifelong learners, and viewed these rules as supporting their child-rearing philosophy. Thus, due to this agreement these parents were willing to accept the PBL processes and practices, or their perceptions of what was occurring, without opportunity to be involved in the decision-making where their understanding and opinions would have been formally recognised.

The data also show that the teachers continually referred to parents as being informed about PBL, through assemblies, newsletters, orientation days and the "launch" day, but not actually involved in the processes leading up to the launch. Two teachers acknowledged that parents were given information but "not actually involved" in any of the decision-making. The different perceptions of involvement expressed by teachers and parents may in part be explained by examining the way teachers and parents communicate with each other.

Teachers seem to have a misinterpretation of what parent involvement means in relation to the implementation of school-based practices. This may be due to curriculum planning and teaching being seen as a "teacher based" activity. Years of study and support from experienced mentors goes into the teaching of every lesson in

every classroom. Parents, generally, are not considered to have the expertise to be involved in this area of practice. Perhaps it is this teacher driven, collaborative process that teachers draw from when evaluating and developing new initiatives such as PBL in schools.

The next chapter will provide the findings for the final two research questions regarding the issues encountered when involving parents in school, and the perspectives for improved parent involvement.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS:
STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON COMMUNICATION, BARRIERS AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES TO IMPROVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

In any organisation, effective communication and relationships between the stakeholders is paramount to that organisation's success. According to Janssens and Seynaeve (2000) all stakeholders have the right to be involved in problem-solving activities, thus, parents have the right to be involved in school initiatives and proposals that affect their children. Furthermore, collaboration and stakeholder theories (Christianakis, 2011; Savage et al., 2010) suggest that there are varying levels at which people feel comfortable participating or being involved in an organisation's activities.

Analysis of the data from teachers and parents identified factors that impact on parent involvement in PBL and more widely in schools. These factors relate to the interactions between teachers and parents around the communication and relationships between them. The analysis revealed what these stakeholders perceived the barriers to involving parents in school to be, and their perspectives for improving parent involvement. It is important to acknowledge the data about the ways in which teachers and parents communicate with each other about academic and social issues related to school. These data, when considering collaboration and stakeholder theories, facilitate understanding about enabling various levels of involvement to accommodate parent skills and abilities.

This chapter will present data from the final three analytical categories. The two categories, "communication and relationships" and "barriers to parent involvement", relate to Research Question 3: What are the issues identified by the teachers, parents and students regarding parent involvement in PBL and in schools

more widely? The fifth analytical category, “suggestions for improved parent involvement”, relates to Research Question 4: What are the perspectives from teachers and parents to improve parent involvement in PBL and in their schools more widely?

The findings from the data will be presented under each main category heading as in the previous chapter, and then divided further under subcategories which assist in answering the final two research questions. Conclusions follow to complete the chapter.

Communication and Relationships

Communication between parents and school begins at the school office with a welcoming smile and a willingness to listen. This body language communication is equally as important as the verbal communication that follows (Malone, 2015). Wong (2012) acknowledged that consistent, effective communication between home and school, coupled with understanding and responsiveness, strengthens relationships between parents and teachers. It is through these trusted relationships that enhancement of student learning and social well-being is achieved. According to Woodrow et al., (2016) there is a dearth of Australian research on ways to improve parent involvement. Therefore, it is important to understand the communication and relationship factors that exist in the Australian context, to support moves to enhance meaningful and respectful parent involvement.

Communication and relationships emerged as a main analytical category in this study from the analysis which located words and phrases that held particular relevance to teacher–parent interactions or the absence of such interactions. Relationships are nurtured through responsive communication; consequently, these two concepts remained connected as a category. Relationships are developed by getting to know people, in this research getting to know the parents. Communicative interactions are an important part of relationships as is the building of trust; as a result, these elements formed the subcategories and an integral part of this investigation.

Not all relationships develop strongly. For some, barriers create distance and detachment. This is also a reality for the teacher–parent relationship and the analysis discovered some of these barriers to communicating effectively and building relationships with parents.

Interaction Between Teachers and Parents

Communication between school personnel and parents is an opportunity to share information about school and home to support the child across these environments. Strengthening home–school ties, however, cannot happen by the simple exchange of written information, a trusted relationship between the two is founded on reciprocal dialogue which is established from their initial meeting. A parent from Westlee reflected on reading written information this way:

> When you read it you don't really understand. Now that I am in the school [as a volunteer] I am aware of things. I think the more we communicate with the school, the teachers, the community, everyone, it's much better for the kids (WP1).

The above quote suggests that written information is not always effective and may leave some parents feeling ignored (Lindblad, Rasmussen & Sandman, 2005). From being in the classroom, to observe and interact with the teaching and learning process, this parent had become aware that home–school communication could be layered to improve parent understanding of and involvement in school processes. According to Prezant and Marshak (2006) effective methods of communication are indicative of respectful, collaborative relationships, which this parent had experienced in the classroom.

Findings showed that communication between teachers and parents was often time limited and official, leaving teachers feeling apprehensive and parents feeling uncomfortable or not understood. One teacher explained that when a parent had come to her with a problem she had offered to find support, which subsequently took a considerable amount of time. This teacher described her feelings of anxiety and frustration with this situation, exacerbated by wondering if the parent thought that she did not care due to the lengthy time frame. These feelings may be due to a

number of factors however, it is the unfortunate reality that teachers do not, or cannot, have regular meaningful conversations with parents due to their requisite commitments. Thus, the lack of personal contact detracts from the ability to form a trusted relationship between the teacher and the parent.

Interaction between teachers and parents was also complicated where parents did not speak English well or at all. One parent revealed that because she could not speak English fluently she often felt embarrassed talking to the teachers and she would not attend meetings for the same reason. Some parents could not speak English and relied upon their children to translate information for them. This can create problems for teachers and parents because "a lot of parents probably get a note, they sign it [and] they don't know what they are signing" (GT5). In such cases, teachers were concerned that some parents were not aware of what their children were doing at school or where they were going on excursions, because they were not proficient in the English language. A data sample explains:

> Sometimes the children are the ones who speak English for the parents. So for them to get an understanding, to communicate with us about what is happening with their children sometimes can be really, really difficult when the expert English speaker is five or six years old (WT2).

This study found that not being able to be understood was the unfortunate reality for some teachers and parents in this study. Apart from the frustration that this may cause, using children as interpreters for their parents may have detrimental psychological effects and interfere with the stable, well-adjusted development of the child (Coleman, 2013; Cohen, Moran-Ellis & Chris, 1999). While interpreter services are available through the NSW DoE, they need to be scheduled in advance, and thus, availability is not always well matched for the circumstances.

The time constraints that teachers faced, as the findings show, raised some issues for parents. Some parents voiced their disappointment that more time to communicate with teachers could not be offered. Parents reported that formal parent–teacher meetings were only scheduled twice per year and that this was not often enough to satisfy all that they wanted to know about how their children were progressing at school. Guo (2009) found that parents in his study felt similarly,

saying that "teacher/parent" meetings were too short to address all that parents wanted to know about the curriculum and learning, and social behaviour. Even though meetings with teachers could be scheduled at any time, the findings showed that parents perceived that teachers were always busy and they did not want to "disturb" or "upset" them, and so issues that parents wished to discuss often remained concealed.

Although the parents from Westlee and Grayson regarded their schools as "good" and "welcoming", when it came to discussing issues concerning behaviour or learning, reticence about approaching staff persisted.

The words of one mother explained:

> Even though they are so welcoming and have this open door policy and come in and tell me exactly what's happening, I don't want to be in this office again…here she comes again, what's your next complaint, that would play on my mind (GP1).

While these parents thought highly of their school, cultivating pathways of trusted communication and building relationships between staff and parents were challenging.

Teachers were aware that many conversations with parents were about problems or difficulties with learning or behaviour. An Australian study by Bitew and Ferguson (2010) found that immigrant parents often had no contact with school unless a behaviour problem existed. These researchers went on to say that family support across many areas is needed to reduce ongoing disadvantage for immigrant populations. The findings in Table 14 show that teachers had concerns about the way communication occurred between teachers and parents regarding problematic behaviour.

Table 13: Teachers Connect Communication and Relationships

Analytical theme	Teacher responses
Communication from school about a child's behaviour is perceived by parent as negative	Some parents feel that the only time they get spoken to is when [their] child is doing something wrong (WT3).
	[Teachers do not want] to be the voice of doom and gloom [and have] parents run every time they [see their] face (WT5).
	The only time they [parents] ever get spoken to from the school though, about your son, your daughter has done this or been on detention for this, and it's a lot of negative feedback. If it is negative all the time that parent is eventually going to distance themselves and the gap between school and home is going to get further and further apart (GT6).
Building relationships will support better communication	If you're having a negative relationship with somebody you often distance yourself from that person (GT6).
	A relationship needs to be built between the parent and the school (WT5).

As Table 14 indicates teachers identified an association between relationship building and more positive communication to support difficulties when and if they arise.

Although challenges existed with communicating effectively with parents and building trusted relationships, teachers believed parent involvement to be important. Table 15 shows a sample of teacher perspectives about parent involvement.

Table 14: Teacher Perspectives on Parent Involvement

Analytical theme	Teacher comments
Parent involvement is important	It's really important to have parent input…It is very important to have parents involved (GT1).
	I think students would benefit from parents being able to participate more in school (GT2).
	I think it is really important to get them involved (GT6).
	The parent should be totally involved because it is my belief that the school, the home…and the community should be working together (WT1).
	I think it would be a good idea to get parents involved (WT4).
	Getting parents, teachers and students involved together I think is a great way to forge links between home and school (WT6).

The data sample in Table 15 shows that teachers from Westlee and Grayson shared similar views about the importance of parent involvement.

While all teacher participants said that parent involvement was important, the findings in Table 16 indicate that there may be an underlying perception, by some teachers, that a number of parents are incapable of supporting the academic and behavioural needs of their children due to personal issues and problems or their lack of a particular skill set.

Table 15: Teacher Perceptions of Parent Skills and Competences

Analytical theme	Teacher comments
Views on parent skills and competences	[Some] parents have given up they can't do anything… ultimately they have problems themselves (WT1).
	I don't think parents are equipped or understand they're at a loss as to how to help their child (WT6).
	The kids that have problems have parents who don't care or don't maybe have any idea of what is expected of their child (GT3).
	A lot of parents may not necessarily have the skills to help their children (GT6).

Poza et al., (2014) suggest that such dismissive attitudes about parents produce deficit perceptions which discourage the very involvement that these schools are trying to encourage. The data in Table 16 represents teacher perceptions of some parent's skills and competencies. While these may be viewed as "deficit perceptions", teachers later reflected on these as "opportunities" to support parents and build relationships. Notwithstanding the general anxiety of discussing behavioural and learning issues with parents and the sometimes-present language difficulties, it was found that teachers believed improving parent involvement would be beneficial to the academic and social development of the students. Further to this finding, teachers indicated that getting to know parents would support better communication, and assist with developing respectful relationships.

Getting to Know Parents

Collaboration and stakeholder theories (Christianakis, 2011; Savage et al., 2010) suggest that getting to know parents offers the opportunity to develop their skills as stakeholders in education, to be better equipped to be involved in school in various capacities. Christianakis (2011) states that schools often "assume that parents have the time, skills and will to partner with teachers" (p. 161). The previous sections presented findings indicating that although teachers regarded parent involvement as important, they questioned parent competence to become involved in school. Analysis of the interactions between teachers and parents found that building trusted relationships and effective communication systems would be supportive of both the teachers and the parents. It was found that parents wanted more time with teachers to discuss schooling issues however, some were uncomfortable in the presence of teachers (a subject which will be expanded upon later in the chapter). The findings indicate that teachers and parents want a better relationship and that there is work to be done to support teachers with ways to achieve this. Teachers understood that building better relationships with parents started with getting to know them in the context of their family rather than through the context of curriculum and policies. Westlee school had initiated "parent–teacher conferences" where the discussion was not focused on academic ability or achievement but on getting to know the child in the context of the family:

> We're having a parent–teacher conference where we actually talk about each individual child and it's not like report time where you're talking about the child's grades, you're actually talking about the child (WT3).

Teachers could see the benefits in providing time for this kind of conversation to occur. It fulfilled their understanding for the need to "get to know" more about the children and their families, and provide opportunities to have natural and genuine conversations with parents. The opportunity to build conscious connections with parents was considered by the teachers as a way to begin to build trusted relationships. This teacher continued:

> It's good if parents feel they can come to you as well because the idea is to work together and what you do at school impacts on what you do at home and outside of school later on (WT3).

This particular teacher could see how a genuine, respectful relationship with the family could encourage the growth of positive social and academic supports for the child and the family. Provisioning change in this way for teachers and parents to communicate may encourage the relationship building process. The experience of this supportive interaction fulfils a need for both teachers and parents. This same teacher shared a moment when a parent came to see her:

> I saw her and I automatically thought "what's wrong, are you OK?", and it's, "Oh I just came to tell you that they are doing really well and thank you". Yes! I was on a high for the rest of the day (WT3).

The benefits of this exchange are evident, there was a clear connection between the family and the teacher, and the relationship was one of mutual respect. Informal encounters such as this take little time, however giving support and positive feedback has the potential to create closer links between teacher and parents.

To facilitate involving parents in the education of their children, teachers spoke of Kindergarten as the prime time to get to know parents:

> In Kindergarten [parents] are keen for information…they want to do everything to help their child succeed in school I suppose (GT5).

> The Kindergarten parents are the most excited about school that would be the best time to get them in (WT2).

Teachers stated that more time to get together informally with parents at this early stage would help relationships to grow and make communication with families easier as their children progressed through school. Thus, teachers linked personalising their communication to building better relationships with parents. In giving teachers the liberty to talk about how they might get to know parents and build relationships with them, the notion of "trust" was mentioned as an important element to nurture meaningful communication and relationships.

Developing Trust in Relationships

As already discovered, building trusting relationships is a crucial element to engaging parents in school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Stetson, Stetson, Sinclair & Nix, 2012) however, building these links with families takes time. Building relationships with parents, not only supports parent involvement but also contributes to better academic and social outcomes for students (Auerbach, 2009; Ferlazzo, 2011; Hart, 2010).

How does one human being learn to trust another? And; how can trust be developed in the context of school between teachers and parents? Engaging in a conversation with a perfect stranger, when the subject is the child, is routine for teachers. However, elements such as inexperience, personal insecurities, communication styles or English proficiency, impact on the ability to do this well. These elements apply to both teachers and parents. Therefore, the findings indicate that to begin to build trusted relationships, intervening to improve these elements is fundamental. When asked how teachers might "get to know" parents to have a better relationship with them, teachers replied as follows:

> Building that trust and rapport with the family is the biggest thing (WT3).

> If parents see that you are willing to give up your time to meet with them, then it's more of an open place and they are going to want to come back into the school to see people (GT6).

Some teachers talked about parents feeling isolated and not knowing where to turn when impacted by personal problems or behaviour or learning difficulties related to their children. One teacher summarised:

> Most parents are doing the best they can possibly do, some are just exhausted, totally overwhelmed or just don't know what to do and feel very uncomfortable. I think you just have to keep working with them and convincing parents that we want the best for their children and that we are on the same side. Once they believe that and you can give a little bit, the schools have to give first, then you can start to build that trust (WT7).

The data samples illustrate the importance of trust in a relationship. However, knowing that trust is an important element does not make it easy to cultivate, particularly between strangers. Nurturing trust becomes more difficult when barriers, such as lack of language proficiency, add to the complexity of building relationships, as the findings show.

Parents also spoke of trust and how this might be developed differently for different people. One parent offered this explanation:

> I know a lot of parents cause I've been in this school for six years. They all belong to different cultures and they all think in a different way. For example, they can be outspoken to you because they have that trust with you…but some people are hesitant because they feel "my English is no good" or "my confidence is not high". I don't know they just refuse to take that step further (WP2).

The analysis of this data sample linked trust, with parents' confidence and ability to communicate effectively in English.

The data also reported that teachers were concerned that some parents were only ever spoken to when their child's behaviour was problematic at school. The data show that interactions between teachers and parents can be active and rewarding, frustrating, confrontational or academic and superficial. Whatever interaction occurs between teachers and parents a constructive outcome is the goal.

Two things become evident. First, communicating with, getting to know, and developing trust with parents is challenging and complex, as the data show, but necessary to support the academic and social success of students, as stated in the literature (Coleman, 2013; Fan & Williams, 2010; Ingram et al., 2007; Kim & Page, 2013). Second, teachers and parents share common ground in wanting the best outcomes for their children, and agree that building better relationships is the key to encouraging better parent involvement. A critical step according to Conroy (2012) is developing trusted relationships with parents that lead to working collaboratively for the betterment of the child.

While there are complexities to building relationships and involving parents in school as was found by this study, it was important to gather stakeholder responses regarding the barriers to parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely. Thus, further findings related to parent involvement were assembled under the analytical code of "barriers to parent involvement" which are addressed in the following section.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

The barriers to involving parents in school vary depending on the characteristics of the community from which schools draw their students. A qualitative study by Woodrow et al., (2016) conducted in seven states and territories across Australia, found that the barriers to parent engagement are often not shared between schools in the same areas, resulting in the information becoming isolated. According to Woodrow et al., (2016) the outcome of this inattention to collate cumulative data is pockets of neglect and inaction. This is not because schools do not have the will to act, but is due to the lack of a systems approach to coordinating support for teachers and parents.

Subcategories which accrued under this main analytical category of "barriers to parent involvement" added to the already identified issues of communication and relationship building. The analysis of the data gathered from teachers and parents found five significant barriers to parent involvement at Westlee and Grayson schools. These barriers are identified in Table 17 (parents) and Table 18 (teachers), where they are matched with sample quotes from the participants. These barriers are then discussed under the subcategory headings as in the previous sections.

Table 16: Barriers to Parent Involvement – Parent Data

Subcategory	Parent data
English language proficiency	They feel a bit intimidated, they don't speak English (WP1).
	I feel a lot of mothers are in the dark, it could be ah language barriers (WP2).
	Parents that don't speak English, how do we meet their needs? (GP4)
	I would like to come…but my English is limited (GP3).
Time and child care	Who's going to look after my kids, they don't have child care facilities [at school] …child care is too expensive (WP1).
	Everyone's got limited time (GP4).
	Parents are very busy they don't have much time (GP3).
Self-efficacy and	Confidence is not that high, they're ashamed they might ask the wrong questions and look silly, I don't know, it's fearful (WP1).
	[Some parents will not approach the school] If they felt comfortable going to the school and not feel that they were hassling somebody or taking up someone's time (GP4).
	I feel embarrassing to talking to the teacher (GP3).
Cultural differences	Cultural difference has got to do with it because they have different beliefs (WP1).
	A lot of parents I've spoken to believe that the discipline of children is the sole um, responsibility of the school (WP2).
	Every custom, every country have different values, the way we've been brought up is totally different (WP3).
Local services knowledge	If we get this lesson on Positive Parenting, I think it would be really good [also] adult education opportunities (WP1).
	[A playgroup on school premises] they give us information on a range of things, nutrition, eye test, dental, they arrange people from…they come and give a talk about [things we want to know about] (WP3).
	Some people come from a different background, they don't really know that there are services out there that can help you (GP4).

Table 17: Barriers to Parent Involvement – Teacher Data

Subcategory	Teacher data
English language proficiency	[Parents] don't have a lot of English, and don't feel they can converse properly (WT2).
	English language classes would help parents to communicate to the teacher (WT6).
	When the child translates the message doesn't always get through (GT2).
Time and child care	[There is limited time] if you're working it makes things worse and if the children are still at home who is going to look after them (WT1).
	Child care is a big issue (GT4).
Self-efficacy and cultural differences	Parents might feel intimidated coming to the school or working with teachers (WT3).
	We've got lots of parents who say they don't speak English, "I can't read properly I don't know how to help [my children]" (GT4).
	Different cultures, we have a lot of issues with the kids' [culturally accepted behaviour] …here you need to respect teachers and you need to follow the rules (WT3).
	Aside from having language barriers [there are] cultural sort of barriers that may be overcome with interpreters (GT4).
Local services knowledge	As teachers we don't know what services are available out there (WT3).
	I assumed there was a service out there guiding parents but the reality is I don't think there are a lot of people pointing them in the right direction (WT4).
	What we have to be able to do is link parents with support agencies…initiate that with and for the parents because sometimes they just have no idea about it (WT7).
	Do [parents] have those connections to access those supports outside [in the community] (GT4).

English Language Proficiency

Communicating effectively with and building relationships between teachers and parents at Westlee and Grayson is complicated by some parents not being proficient in the English language. Bitew and Ferguson (2010) found that parents

who lacked English language skills were less likely to help with homework or participate in school activities. This is not surprising, but is a concern as the findings from this study show that a lack of communication and miscommunication can cause teachers to perceive parents as disinterested in school and parents to perceive that they will not be supported or understood.

The analysis of data from all teacher and parent participants in this study found that a lack of English language skill had negative effects on parent's self-esteem with regard to written and verbal communication with the schools. It can be argued that the lack of English proficiency was the single most frequently encountered barrier to parent involvement mentioned by teachers and parents. Many felt that an absence of English language skill also discouraged connections between different cultural groups and made it difficult to access a range of local services that might support families. Although adult and child interpreters were used occasionally in both schools, teachers stated that this was not the best way to convey meaning or protect confidentiality. Conroy (2012) states that children should not be used as interpreters in specialised professional situations to convey important information, and that adult interpreters should be fluent in the language and the culture of the person for whom they are interpreting. Consequently, analysis of the teacher and parent data found that language proficiency was a significant barrier for parents to many aspects of involvement in school and in the community.

Previously, researchers have noted similar findings, with Conroy (2012) stating that CALD families require targeted strategies to encourage their involvement. Jung (2011) suggested that teachers may misinterpret parent's passivity as disinterest in or satisfaction with school policies and procedures, when in fact parents choose avoidance due to low self-efficacy. The analysis of the data captured phrases such as "embarrassing talking to teachers", "some parents feel uncomfortable", "they might feel silly" and "they lack confidence", which link to low parent self-efficacy and the notion of power inequity. When schools misinterpret the demeanour of parents, and lack strategies to support their involvement, parents from all backgrounds may prefer to withdraw from involvement in school rather than participate in activities that create feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Language is only one of many barriers to parent involvement found by analysing the data in this

study. Measures to reduce the impact of the barriers identified in this study, including that of language proficiency, are presented as perspectives for improving parent involvement later in this chapter. Child care and time, addressed in the next section, are also recurrent themes which prevent parent involvement in school.

Child Care and Time

Families with young children often find that they are time poor as they try to negotiate work commitments and family priorities. A genuine concern of teachers was the safety of students who were brought to school early, up to an hour before scheduled teacher supervision, by parents on their way to work. Teachers noted that the cost, options for, and limited hours of child care were factors for parent participation in the workforce and their involvement in school:

> Well I think child care is a big issue because we have kids here at 7:30 in the morning, and I think their issue is, um, being able to afford child care. Some parents work two or three jobs…the parents will tell you that child care is so expensive (WT3).

Parents stated that the less expensive option of having family or friends care for their children, either regularly or occasionally, was not possible for many families:

> I don't have any family here and I know most of the parents have the same problem. I cannot rely on a neighbour to look after my kids, it's a very dangerous world now days you cannot trust anyone. I'm living in a unit…you blink your eyes and a new neighbour is standing there whom you don't even know (WP1).

The data identified that parents regard school as a familiar and safe place. It is reasonable to conclude from this, that parents who leave their children at school prior to scheduled supervision time feel that they will be safe and cared for during that time. The parents in this study said that the cost and operating hours of child care prohibited participation in the work force, further education and training opportunities. Those who could secure full-time work were bound by school hours because of the lack of before-and-after-school care facilities that they could access

due to the hours of operation. The operating hours for before-and-after-school care facilities are generally 7am to 6pm and these facilities do not operate in all schools. However, some schools provide bus transport for students from one school to another with parents having to collect their children from the after-school care facility which may be some distance from their home school. Parents who relied on public transport could often not meet the pick-up times for many of these facilities and thus were not eligible to have their children attend.

The analysis uncovered multiple themes around child care which were linked to parent involvement in school. The lack of child care options for parents prevents their involvement with school. Those parents who work lack time to attend school meetings and functions. For those who do not work and have young children, attending school meetings is also difficult because young children can be a distraction to others at that meeting. Some parents wanted to help in classrooms and be more of a presence at school, but having children under school age prevented their doing so. Parents with young children said they were time poor and always busy. Their days revolved around school drop-off and pick-up, and babies' eating and sleeping times. Time-wise, evenings too were a struggle making it difficult for parents to participate in school activities or meetings. Spouses employed in shift work who worked long hours and arrived home late were not available for child care, therefore, preventing their partner from attending evening activities. These findings, under this one subcategory of "child care", illustrate some of the complexities that affect parents' ability to become involved in school.

The availability of time and trustworthy child care poses difficulties for parents to engage with school. These findings are similar to those of Woodrow et al., (2016) who also found time and child care barriers to parent engagement with school in Australia. This is indeed a dilemma for schools trying to engage parents more in decision-making and activities to support academic and social learning. Parents in this study also understood that teachers have preparation and planning to do as well as attending meetings before and after school, and as stated previously, some parents saw teachers as too busy to have the time to really engage with them.

When time and child care factors were discussed from the perspectives of teachers and parents in relation to parent involvement in school, many complex difficulties emerged. Schools do not plan to exclude parents, and parents do not want to be excluded however, the findings show that child care and time are issues for schools and parents, and an indicator that a "one size fits all" approach to involving parents in school would not facilitate the desired outcome for either group of stakeholders.

The literature (Khanal, 2013; Mytton, Ingram, Manns & Thomas, 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016) suggests that schools should embrace a more flexible approach to involving parents by accommodating their diverse needs and their ability to be involved in various aspects of school. As the findings show, the barriers to parent involvement are many, and there is a risk that some barriers may become isolated and overlooked. Woodrow et al., (2016) suggest that without the collaborative support of schools in the same location, some barriers to parent involvement will become invisible. A flexible approach by schools may help to find collaborative solutions to barriers which would otherwise remain ignored. For the teachers and parents from Westlee and Grayson, the importance of having their perspectives acknowledged is the beginning of this collaborative approach between schools. Previous literature cited school collaboration as a way of addressing all the identified barriers to parent involvement within a particular geographical region. The development of school networks within defined areas can therefore serve to bring together families who might otherwise feel isolated as minorities within the home school. By connecting families in this way, a more effective approach to supporting their needs could be achieved.

Cultural Difference and Self-Efficacy of Parents

The literature (Means, Mackenzie, Davey & Dewe, 2015; Short, 2016) suggests that cultural differences and self-efficacy are intertwined. This adds to the complexity of "getting to know" parents in order to improve communication and relationships and thereby enhance parent involvement. While cultural differences and parent self-efficacy may contribute to a lack of involvement in education, Tang, (2015) suggests that to improve parent self-efficacy and overcome differences in the

perception of their role in education, opportunities must be presented for this to occur. For example, Means et al., (2015) state that, "cultural differences pose challenges for groups, which to perform well have to achieve social integration [and] communicate effectively…Individuals tend to trust, like and choose to spend time with those they find similar to themselves" (p. 307). However, cultural differences can exist within a homogeneous population, where values and traditions are family or community based. It is important for teachers to develop understandings of their students' culture and home life to be able to support their academic and social performance in the educational environment (Short, 2016).

The findings indicate that some parents at the two schools had experienced a very different educational environment from that of their children in Australia. As learners, these parents were not expected to question learning content but simply to accept it and remember it. For some parents, it is not within their cultural repertoire to question or offer an opinion about school procedures or practices. Therefore, teacher beliefs about parents' disinterest in schooling or their acceptance of PBL rules and procedures may be misplaced due to cultural misunderstandings.

The immigrant parents in one focus group spoke of their own school experiences saying that in their country they were "suppressed", were not allowed to "give their ideas…just be a good listener, you're a good learner…we learnt only from books". These parents then compared their learning experiences with those of their children in Australia and stated:

> Right from kindy you know, they are given the opportunity to learn…they give their ideas and sometimes [teachers] share their opinions with them [talk to them] they respect the values of the child as well…your teaching strategies are different from what we learnt…and they have different resources too. The children are learning and they are enjoying too (WP1).

The prior experiences of parents influences their perception of the skills they believe are necessary to become involved in school activities. This perception, entwined with the limitations of culture and language, impacts on their ability to develop the trusted relationships that are essential for respectful and inclusive involvement in schools. Wang (2015) suggests that a person's self-efficacy is

affected by the quality of that person's relationships with others. Therefore, the challenge is to develop trusting relationships through understanding individual families and inclusive practices which in turn may positively affect the self-efficacy of some parents. Coleman (2013) suggests that to foster truly collaborative family-school relationships, parents need self-confidence to advocate for themselves and their children.

When parent involvement in school is examined, the complexities become all too apparent. In this study, the main themes have been examined in situ and related to research and literature worldwide. Building trusted relationships, being more time flexible and focusing on better communication are all impacted by English proficiency, cultural differences and self-efficacy issues.

Throughout Chapters seven and eight, the findings revealed that the cultural differences and the self-efficacy of parents influence their involvement in school. Table 19 presents a sample of that data in which can be seen the interconnected nature of these barriers to parent involvement. English proficiency, cultural differences, self-efficacy, and the other identified barriers, all influence interactions between teachers and parents and between parents and others within and outside of school. These barriers, in turn, impact negatively on the ability to develop the trusted relationships necessary for the respectful inclusion of parents in school, where PBL is a significant part of student discipline and welfare.

Table 18: Participant Data on Parent Cultural Difference and Self-Efficacy

Cultural difference	Self-efficacy
They all belong to different cultures, they all think in a different way (WP2).	I don't want to be in that office again (GP1).
The culture it's different…the Western culture, it's different. I would like to learn more so I can help [daughter] settle down in this country (GP3).	Confidence is not high, they are ashamed they might ask the wrong questions and look silly (WP1).
They have different beliefs (WP1).	I feel embarrassing to talking to the teachers (GP3).
The way we have been brought up is totally different (WP3).	Some [parents] are totally overwhelmed...and feel very uncomfortable (WT7).

It is important to note that some of the participant data in Table 19 has been analysed previously to support understandings around relationships, communication or language proficiency. This emphasises the connections among the varying barriers to parent involvement identified in this study and the complexities to be overcome to support better parent involvement in PBL processes and in schools more widely.

The important focus here is that teaching someone to speak more fluently in English would not necessarily improve self-efficacy or their involvement in school or their wider community. Likewise, teaching the idiosyncrasies of their host culture would not necessarily have an effect on parents' involvement in school or community activities. While having a common language and understanding cultural differences are indeed helpful to furthering "parent involvement", the term itself needs to be reconceptualised as a multidimensional construct to which a number of scholars speak (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Epstein, 2013; Intxausti, Etxeberria & Joaristi, 2013). How this might be best done is critical, and will be expanded upon in Chapter nine.

Considering the complexities of involving parents in school, teachers and parents reflected on local services and resources to minimise the issues and barriers identified from the data. Thus follows the next identified analytical subcategory.

Local Community Services Knowledge

The two schools in this study are located in a particular local council district with its own provision of community services, amenities and facilities. Teachers in these local schools may not necessarily reside in that district, and therefore may not be familiar with the services and facilities available to that local community. Through identifying some of the barriers to parent involvement, teachers identified services that might support families and reduce the impact of these inhibitors. Although they had sincere intentions to connect parents with supportive services, teachers complained that they did not know what services were available in their school's local area. The following data sample reflects the view of teachers from both schools:

> My understanding is that the school is actually the first point of call for understanding that there is help out there [through services]. As teachers we don't know all the services that are available. You try to find places to help or support in the community and you don't know [where to begin] (WT3).

Teachers at Westlee and Grayson concurred on the importance of schools to communicate relevant information about available services to parents to support their individual needs as the data in Table 20 show.

Table 19: Teacher Data Regarding Their Knowledge of Local Community Services

Westlee	Grayson
I don't know how they [parents] find out about [services] them [but] everyone can use that information you know (WT1)	I think it is really important that the school have enough information about certain places in the community to give them [parents] (GT6)
I really don't know what's out there and it's something that I feel I should know a lot more about (WT4)	There are a number of agencies outside the school that we [the counsellor] refer parents to (GT7)
We need to be aware of services, the problem is that teachers don't see that as their role (WT2)	Some [parents] might feel like this is the first port of call, you know, I'll come to the school and they will direct me (GT3)

The analysis of this data noted the importance of providing local services information to families however, teachers were largely unaware of what services were available. Although teachers concurred that local services information should be available to parents, some teachers did not see it as their role to provide it. The teaching role is complex and to add to it the responsibility to provide local services information can be argued equally for or against. This is however, an important issue to emerge from this study and will be further addressed in the discussion. The following data samples confirm that a teacher's role is much more than that of an educator:

> Sometimes it is really hard because you are doing all these roles, social worker, psychologist, you know, you are trying to take on so much of these kids, you're with them all the time and it feels like you can't do the best for them because you are trying to do all these other things (WT3).

> Teachers can't do it all. We do a lot, we can't do it all, I think an on-site somebody would be really good (WT7).

The commitment of some teachers to have knowledge of local services is duly noted, however their stresses and frustrations are equally observed. Nevertheless, with policies committed to parent involvement, and some of the barriers and difficulties emerging from this study, a way needs to be found to assist schools to share this information to support parents and families. Teacher data also identifies the need for assistance to facilitate this communication:

> My pie in the sky wish is that there is some on-site resources available, somebody whose job it would be to link families into things…not a teacher (WT7).

Initiatives that support student and family welfare assist teachers also. Findings from the teacher data reveal that they understood that parents needed support in different ways to help and encourage their children at school. Teachers agree that students who feel safe, supported and happy are more able to listen and learn than those who are anxious and stressed (Grills-Taquechel, Fletcher, Vaughn, Denton & Taylor (2013); McGovern, Lowe, & Hill, 2016). Families, regardless of socio-economic status or cultural background have periods of stress and anxiety due to the natural misfortunes of life. Getting to know the families of the children in schools, not only helps to build trusted relationships with them, but through those relationships, helps to support the children and their families through times of adversity. Collaboration between schools and community services can support families and schools in various ways. Working toward parent involvement in schools, in its many forms, must begin with building the trusted relationships on which "involvement" is based. The data in the next section identifies parents' and teachers' perceptions of what might facilitate improved parent involvement in their schools.

Facilitators of Improved Parent Involvement

The analysis shows that teachers acknowledge the valuable contribution parent involvement brings to the education of children. In addition, parents desire to

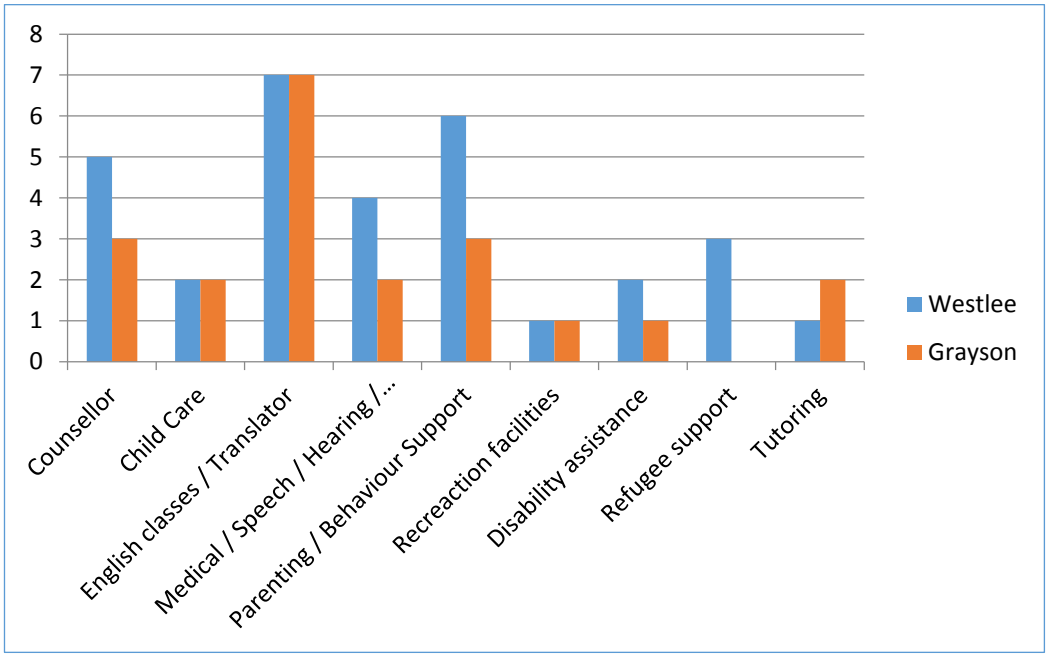
be involved in the education of their children. In the previous section, issues and barriers to involving parents in PBL and in school more widely were identified. Notwithstanding these barriers, teachers and parents were able to suggest ways to facilitate better parent involvement in their school. One is to link teachers and parents with local community services and resources that support families across a wide range of needs. Another is to connect teachers and parents through learning together across topic areas that are considered as appropriate to support their school community. These are discussed in the following sections.

Local Community Services

For schools to be able to connect parents to appropriate services, two things are necessary. It is necessary for teachers first to be aware of, the needs of their students and families, and second, to have knowledge of the supports and resources that are available in the local community. Teachers stated that connecting parents to available services was important but that they were not aware of the services in their local school area. However, providing services information to schools would not be helpful to teachers if they do not know their families well enough to support their individual needs.

An environment in which the exchange of information between teachers and parents is likely to occur, is one where respectful and trusted relationships have been developed and thoughtful avenues of communication have been applied. Thus, teachers should have local services information available and parents should feel respected and confident to ask the school or individual teachers for information to support their needs. Figure 3 shows the number of teachers who indicated a particular service that they perceived would be of benefit to the families in their context.

Figure 3: Teacher Perceptions of Services to Benefit Families



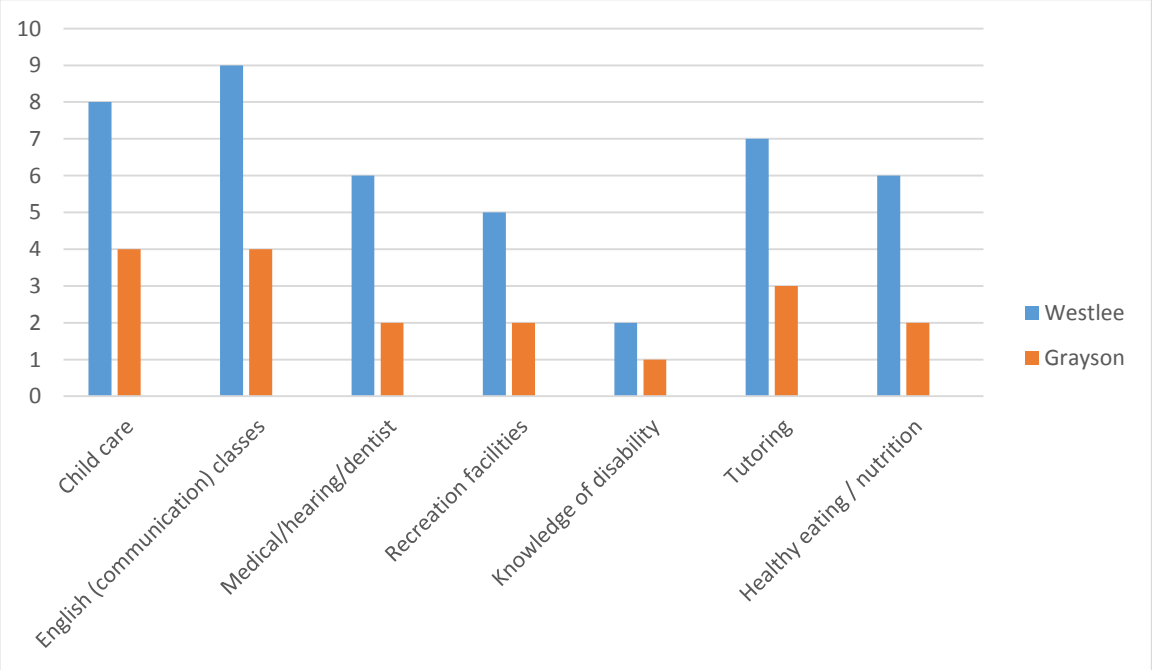
Although the list of local services is not extensive, it demonstrates that across the two schools the teacher perceptions were similar, with the exception of "refugee support". Refugee support is a contextual factor that was limited to Westlee during the period of this study. With increased refugee student enrolment at Westlee, teachers and parents were beginning to recognise the unique needs of this population. It is not the intention of this study to draw particular attention to these families' needs. However, it is the intention, based on the data analysis and subsequent findings, to facilitate a framework of support for schools around parent involvement, influenced by the school context. It is important to note that what counts is not the number of teachers who selected a particular service, but rather the identification of the diversity and uniqueness of the need. That is, these indicators or classifications of family needs are important because of their very existence, not because of the number of families or teachers who identified that need.

Each of these identified services assist staff with the necessary information and support they require. For example, the provision of an information evening about local sporting and recreational facilities, and opportunities to participate in these, supports communication and relationships between teachers and parents and initiates building a community network. These relationships encourage further trust,

communication and confidence to connect to the school environment. Over time, perhaps, parent involvement in PBL and other school activities will result from this interaction.

Interestingly, the findings from the teacher data of the services and facilities represented in Figure 3 are mirrored by the parents' data, in Figure 4, with the exception of counselling and refugee support. The data show that parents wanted better communication with teachers which requires developing improved English literacy proficiencies. They also wanted their children to be competent learners and thus discussed tutoring and behaviour management. Community-based recreation activities were also important to these parent participants, as were flexible child care arrangements that would support a better connection to the classroom and school activities for some.

Figure 4: Parent Perceptions of Beneficial Services



Knowledge about medical check-ups for children's eyesight, hearing, dental and speech disorders, as well as healthy nutrition, were also areas that parents wanted to know more about and which the findings indicate. Although parents did not ask for assistance for a child with a disability, one parent did ask for information about specific disabilities, particularly autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992,

(https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763), states that no person will be discriminated against on the grounds of a disability and that this applies to educational providers (NSW DET, 1992). Further to this, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 affirms that a student with a disability has the same rights under law, as a student without a disability (NSW DET, 2005). Thus, students with a disability, learning difficulties and/or behaviour disorders are, in most cases, included and supported in mainstream classes in NSW public schools. Special schools also exist for students with severe disabilities as do special classes within mainstream schools that include students with a diagnosed disability who will benefit from an individualised teaching and learning program within that mainstream class.

One parent from Westlee recognised that there were students with ASD at that school and wanted to know more about autism to help her child to understand and relate to these students. Obtaining this data from one parent may in fact support many with knowledge and understanding about the students in that context with special needs. Thus, the significance of one parent's comment may provide a learning opportunity for others to develop knowledge and understanding about disabilities to support families not only at school but also out in the wider community. This poignant request from a single parent reflects the need to see beyond the individual to the impact such learning and understanding may have for the wider school community.

The data from some parents suggest that some families may need help because of isolation due to not having friends or family in this country and their lack of English proficiency. The data support these concerns, with one parent saying:

> I cannot imagine someone who can't speak English and may not have connections at the school or may not have family connections or they are in a new place or something like that, how hard would it be for them (GP3).

Although some parents suggested that some families struggle with managing the behaviour of their children, their isolation or the misfortunes of life, they refrained from using the word "counselling". It may be interpreted that a stigma is attached to any need for "counselling", and that "help-seeking" is a less threatening term however, the data cannot support this view. The perceptions of parents about

the “services and support” that may help families in their school may be explained in two ways. First, parents may perceive need through their observations of family interactions with their children or with the school and form an opinion. Second, they may not be aware of what local services, facilities or supports are available and accessible to families in the local community and therefore, a presumption of needs has been expressed. Therefore, the validity of parent perceived needs of local families is not well informed. The foundation of understanding the individual needs within the parent community begins by encouraging respectful relationships and “getting to know” parents and families.

Parents preferred to see support as “learning” opportunities where they may be given information collectively on a range of topics, for example, nutrition, making healthy lunches and supporting transitions from home to school or from primary to high school. These learning opportunities are significant for all stakeholders in education, with Lunkenheimer et al., (2008) making the crucial connection between school readiness, at-risk families and difficulties with learning which may set up a cycle of school failure. Parents were aware that teachers have professional learning on topics in the fields of medicine, mental health, behaviour, disabilities, sports, exercise and, of course, the curriculum. These parents questioned why they could not be included in the professional learning related to their children’s education and welfare. With the literature stating a positive link between academic and social performance and parent involvement (Kim & Page, 2013; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005) their question is indeed relevant.

Teachers also elaborated on the theme of “learning together”. They realised that professional learning opportunities had provided them with knowledge about a range of topics from which parents could also benefit, in particular, positively acknowledging “good” behaviour through PBL training. Teachers then made links between “needs”, “services” and “learning” and these evolved into combined learning sessions that both parents and teachers could attend. Teachers could see how developing knowledge by learning together would give them, with parents, an equal status of “knowing”, which would support conversation, relationships and a way forward to involving parents more in school.

Learning Together

Education is not just teaching children the curriculum content in a progression from Kindergarten to Year twelve to enable employment. As stated in the literature review, children develop in and through a number of social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) where they acquire cultural, moral and behavioural understandings which help to shape them as an adult. Parents and teachers form an integral part of a child's journey to adulthood, and an integral part of the child's social and educational systems. The findings from this study suggest that when teachers engage in learning to support children's development, parents want to be included.

Providing links through learning opportunities may encourage networks of support for families on a range of issues before a crisis point is reached. Connections with local community services are often made "post crises" by teachers and parents, as a reaction to circumstances that have affected a student's engagement with school and learning. According to Unnever et al., (2006) cost-effective family and school-based behaviour interventions may affect several risk factors including adult levels of stress and child noncompliance. Surprisingly, the notion of learning together was suggested by both teachers and parents as a way, not only to gain new knowledge, but also to encourage relationships. In this research, the analysis of parent data suggested that learning together with teachers, as opposed to being informed by them, is a chance to meet on equal terms with teachers at that point and have a common theme for conversations and discussion. In summary, a parent from Grayson made the following point:

> People like us, who don't know where to go, who to approach…if the school could be like a guide…that could be a starting point. We could have a person come in…we could have a specific topic…different topics that can be discussed. That might be something that could bring parents and teachers closer together (GP4).

Table 21 lists the learning topics suggested by teachers and parents. Due to these topics being the same or very similar between the two schools, the data does not differentiate between them or between the parents and teachers.

Table 20: Topics for Joint Learning Opportunities

Learning Together Topics
School readiness
Transition to high school
Healthy eating / cleaning teeth / hygiene
Healthy school lunches
Parenting classes / behaviour management
English language classes
Curriculum information
Being a reading helper in the classroom
Positive Behaviour for Learning
Adult education / training opportunities
Child care / occasional care facilities
Sporting and recreation options
Understanding disability (autism / learning)
Understanding the health system / counselling
Bullying / cyber-bullying

If teachers understand that parents want information on a range of topics from curriculum, understanding behaviour and recreational activities to child care options, counselling support and medical interventions, they also realise that if the school provides the venue for the learning together sessions, it can extend an opportunity for more "shared" understandings across the needs and interests of their school community. Although English language learning may not be a seminar topic, the findings show that holding such classes on the school grounds and at varying times to suit families would encourage and enable parent participation.

The benefits of this learning-together approach to involving parents are supported by the following teacher and parent data:

> The benefit [of learning together] is that parents would have those links with the teacher, to know that we are being informed at the same time. I think it builds trust between the teacher and the parents. It doesn't make the parents feel so isolated…we're all there to help. So I think attending everything together would be a good idea (WT6).

From the parent perspective:

> I ask the teachers, tell me what I can do if my child is misbehaving, or if she's not listening and stuff…If we get this lesson on positive parenting I think it would be really good. I never heard of anywhere they have this class…going with the teachers and parents involved in it, it would be really amazing to see, you know…we can exchange ideas (WP1).

Conroy (2012) suggests that building relationships and empowering families should be the focus for schools wanting to involve parents in the education of their children. When schools focus on building relationships with parents, they support an empowerment framework which provides the means for parents to make informed decisions about matters that are important to them. Empowerment, however, includes a trusting environment, trust to take the first step without feeling awkward or embarrassed. The following data confirm the findings that communicating effectively, building trusted relationships and providing needs-based support are inextricably linked to improving parent involvement in schools and the systems and processes of PBL:

> Some of our families don't have support, in terms of they don't have any extended family here…One of the reasons families aren't coping is because families don't have support, and I think it is a matter of families building trust as well within the community (WT7).

The learning-together approach is a strengths-based approach to involving parents in PBL and more widely in school. Learning together is an empowering strategy for parents as they feel on an equal learning platform with teachers and perhaps more willing to engage in conversation about aspects of a particular seminar. This joint engagement with learning helps to build relationships between the teachers and the parents. Relationships are encouraged not only between teachers and parents but also between the parents themselves creating networks of friendship and support.

The value of these relationships is tied to previously identified findings about developing trust and self-efficacy. Positive improvement in relationships affirms our trust in one another and encourages optimism and confidence. Thus, joint learning sessions may continue to constructively nurture a reduction in the barriers that this research identified.

Knowledge and relationships are not only formed within the school context but also with the community agencies, services and organisations which provide the information. The community as a whole is better supported through the knowledge that is gained and shared by those who attend the information sessions. Such initiatives according to Conroy (2012) may help parents navigate the educational, medical and legal systems supported by the service, other parents and teachers. The findings demonstrate that supporting, teaching and learning together is a step towards improving parent involvement in schools.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the data gathered under categories which facilitated understanding about the barriers to and issues around parent involvement that existed in Westlee and Grayson. Both these schools had a high percentage of CALD families (Table 6) which makes effective communication with parents challenging at every level, whether written or verbal, formal or informal. The literature confirms this (Intxausti et al., 2013; Poza et al., 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016) and adds that developing trusting relationships between teachers and parents is the very foundation for improving communication, and thus, parent involvement, in school (Means et al., 2015; Wang, 2015). The involvement of CALD families in PBL and in school more widely was not the subject of this study however, the contexts of the participating schools were influential to the findings. With reference to a previous category, "getting to know" families and the contextual uniqueness of a school is the place to begin involving parents in education. Communication and building trusting relationships with parents is critical to the involvement process, regardless of the ethnic composition of the school population, but it is necessary to consider it.

The complications associated with building trusting relationships, which support more effective communication, were identified by the data and expressed as barriers to parent involvement. These barriers comprise the lack of English proficiency, time and child care. Additionally, the complexities of cultural difference and issues of self-efficacy were found. Teachers recognised the need to support families by building better relationships and communication strategies, but did not always have the tools to provide that support. Thus, they complained that they did not know what local services were available to offer the assistance that some families needed. Even when support agencies were found, teachers could not be sure if parents accessed such agencies, as communication between agencies or organisations was often restricted by the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) (http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/privacy-laws). Thus, if parents did not share information with the school it was often difficult or impossible to obtain it for the purpose of continuity of care and learning strategies.

Through the analysis, issues and barriers emerged. Attentive to the interview process, the teachers and parents recognised that the "barriers" could be framed in a positive way to encourage relationships and communication in response to the needs of the school community. Both sets of stakeholders suggested that topics of interest could be presented, with teachers and parents learning together about a range of subjects that support their school community. Parents saw school as a safe and familiar place, and suggested that "learning together" sessions be held on school premises. Teachers wanted critical information, such as the behaviour management strategies developed through PBL, to be shared with parents and felt that learning together with the parents provided opportunities, not only to learn but also to get to know their families better.

Dearing et al., (2006) maintain that schools need to reach out to families and help them to overcome the barriers to involvement. Therefore, in conclusion, schools require an understanding of the barriers that exist in their individual settings before they can prepare the flexible approaches necessary for better interactions with parents to occur, which may lead to better parent involvement in PBL and in schools more widely.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine parent involvement throughout the implementation process of PBL in two primary schools in South Western Sydney. Positive Behaviour for Learning is a behaviour change system based on the teaching of appropriate social and academic behaviours to improve student learning outcomes. As legislation (NSW Education Act, 1990) DoE policies ("Student Discipline in Government Schools" NSW DET, 2006a; "Student Welfare Policy", NSW DET 2002; The National Safe Schools Framework, 2011) acknowledge parents as valued partners in education, it was important to examine the nature and extent of parent involvement in PBL implementation decision-making processes, specifically in relation to the policy expectations of involving parents. The literature explicates that parent involvement in the lives of their children has the potential to increase successful academic and social outcomes (Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2014; Sanders, 2003; Woodrow et al., 2016). Therefore, the literature, DoE policies and PBL regard parent involvement as an important element to reinforcing positive social and academic outcomes of students.

In discussing the significance and implications of the findings, the low response rate of parents must be acknowledged since those who chose not to be interviewed may have expressed different viewpoints. However, it should also be noted that the responses were similar across both schools, and that the nature of their responses were very consistent. This consistency lends credence to the findings.

The findings show, for the first time, the variables that exist in two PBL primary schools with regard to parent involvement in PBL school decision-making processes and in school more widely. Surprisingly, the findings from the participants from each school are very similar across each of the research questions. This may be due to the similar urban location of these individual schools. This study finds that

effective communication and building relationships with parents are the foundation for improving parent involvement. Following on from the identification of these elements of encouraging parent involvement, the Schools to Improve Parent Involvement (STIPI) model will be presented in this chapter to increase opportunity for parents to be involved in the education of their children.

Summary of Findings in Relation to Existing Research and Literature

This study posed four research questions. The first two research questions explored stakeholder knowledge of PBL and perceived involvement in the PBL implementation processes:

> *Research Question 1: What are the perceptions and understandings of teachers, parents and students regarding PBL?*
>
> *Research Question 2: How do teachers and parents perceive parent involvement in PBL implementation and in school more widely?*

The teachers, students and parents from both case study schools, valued PBL as a system to teach students to "be safe, be respectful and be a learner" at school. Accepting and valuing PBL were not findings unique to the participants from Westlee and Grayson, with research literature explicating the success of PBL (Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski & Strycker, 2016; Yeung, Mooney, Barker & Dobia, 2009). Thus, the findings from this study support the preliminary success data on PBL in Sydney, Australia (Yeung et al., 2009). Despite this concurrence, the literature recognises that in Australia more research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of PBL implementation systems and strategies. As previously stated, with parents' involvement being highly valued, their involvement in PBL may further support the overall effectiveness of implemented strategies.

The findings reported that incidental conversations that teachers had with parents about PBL gave teachers the perception that they and all parents accepted and valued the PBL rules and processes. Through analysis of the artefacts however, it was found that each of the participating schools had a high percentage of parents

with English as their second language (see Table 5) who felt embarrassed talking to teachers and avoided participating in school meetings. Given this, the teachers' perceptions may well be viewed with some scepticism. This finding is consistent with the literature which states that parents' limited skills in reading, writing and verbally communicating in English hinder their involvement in school (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010). The findings revealed that the language barrier and time constraints made communication with teachers difficult for many. Therefore, it is an assumption by teachers that there existed widespread parent acceptance of PBL, as the majority of parents were not contributors to these conversations.

Positive Behaviour for Learning, with its teaching based approach embedded throughout the teaching day, and the influence it may have on family life, may not be fully understood by teachers. Perhaps the findings from this study explain, in part, the passive acceptance by parents to be informed about PBL rather than to be involved. However, there remains the misperception that providing written or verbal information and opportunities to discover details through invitations to activity days (such as the launch of PBL) equates to being "involved" in the decision-making processes. Teachers genuinely believed that parents were involved because they had "been informed every step of the way". Thus, the teachers may have misconstrued "informed" for "involved" especially when the parents actively supported PBL.

Further to the teachers' perception that PBL systems and processes were widely accepted by the parents from both schools, is the finding that, according to the artefacts examined during the course of this research, no evidence exists to suggest that new or existing parents had any means (other than casual conversations) to share their ideas or concerns about PBL processes or policy interpretations. In addition, one parent shared that she did not know that she could offer her opinion about school procedures. Do parents, proficient in English or not, accept what they do not understand when it comes to the education of their children? This is a question raised by this study because parents had accepted the implementation of PBL without an opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process or to gain a deeper understanding of the system's aims. Congruent with the literature (Giles & Bills, 2017) the opinions of the parents at Westlee and Grayson schools were very much

taken for granted, with little deliberation by teachers to acknowledge the barriers that existed to parent involvement in PBL in either context.

All the stakeholders accepted the PBL rules about being safe, respecting others and their property and being a learner as these rules reflected their own values at school and out in the community. However, a consensus did not exist between teachers and parents about parent involvement in PBL decision-making processes. While the data reveal that teachers believed parents had been involved in PBL, parents stated that they had not been involved in the decision-making processes to introduce and implement PBL into their school. These findings indicate that at Westlee and Grayson, misunderstandings existed about the nature and extent of parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely. These misunderstandings interfered with the development of strategies that would have enabled and supported parent partnerships, relationships and involvement in strategic decision-making processes. The teachers perceived parent involvement as providing parents with information through a variety of means. Teachers at these schools had a misperception of what parent involvement is and how to achieve it. This finding, without denying the good intentions of the schools to involve parents, aligns with the literature on two aspects. First, schools are not equipped with practical strategies to involve parents (Epstein, 2005a; Gordon & Louis, 2009) and second, without these strategies they resort to traditional and tokenistic (Khanal, 2013; Woodrow et al., 2016) approaches to involving parents in school.

The teachers believed that their efforts to keep parents informed demonstrated their commitment to involving parents in school. Vollmer (2001) found this to be a consistent practice in schools with committees that discuss, plan and make decisions prior to informing the community. Such an approach to parent involvement may be considered as superficial and tokenistic because of the decision by each school to *inform* parents. The schools' approach of providing information to parents rather than involving them in decision-making processes was interpreted by the researcher as unintentional. Given that the policies examined during the course of this research did not provide guidelines or strategies to involve parents, schools relied on communication systems, such as providing written information, that were

traditionally accepted. This, in combination with the teachers' belief that all parents were accepting of PBL, was the accepted practice.

The findings show that teachers knew that many of their parents (see Table 5) were unable to read and interpret information provided to them in English, which contradicts their beliefs that parents were informed. According to collaboration and stakeholder literature (Christianakis, 2011; Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000; Savage et al., 2010) collaborative planning and decision-making is founded upon effective communication and relationship building. Consequently, when these have not been established, there is a disparity between what schools know about their parent population and the practices put in place to support their involvement in PBL or wider school initiatives. Based on the lack of English proficiency of many of the parents from Westlee and Grayson, it remains unclear how many parents were adequately informed on school-related issues or the intention of policies.

In response to the first two research questions, while there was strong support for the implementation of PBL from the teacher, student and parent participants at Westlee and Grayson, it is evident that the schools' culture may have promoted the assumptions that guided PBL implementation without the involvement of parents. Giles and Bills (2017) refer to a positive school culture as having collaborative planning processes which recognise the unique challenges and strengths that intuitive school leaders "nourish and build upon". Such leaders continue with the knowledge that educational change begins by examining the "deeply held truths" and the "taken for granted ideas" that can hold back progress toward the goals held for education (academic and social success) and parent involvement as stated in education policies.

The focus of this investigation was parent involvement in PBL implementation however, during the research other important factors (effective communication and relationship building) were identified that impacted on the quality and scale of parent involvement at Westlee and Grayson. These factors became integral to this investigation as they were shown to be the foundation for best practice in developing parent involvement strategies. Nevertheless, without teacher professional learning about the importance of parent involvement or the availability of practical strategies to develop best practices, these teachers proposed a new

approach to involving parents in school. These factors became apparent to the teachers and parents through the in-depth responses to the open-ended questions posed to answer the last two research questions:

> *Research Question 3. What are the issues identified by the teachers, parents and students regarding parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely?*
>
> *Research Question 4. What are the perspectives from teachers and parents to improve parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely?*

The issues identified that impacted negatively on parent involvement were the number of parents not proficient in the English language, a lack of time and responsible child care, cultural differences and the influence each of these had on parent self-efficacy when it came to becoming involved in school. Even though teachers were aware that many parents were time poor due to work and family commitments, they remained judgemental of parents when they did not attend meetings at school. This finding is consistent with literature (Ferguson, 2008; Khanal, 2013; Woodrow et al., 2016) that explains that when parents do not attend meetings or respond to correspondence, the assumption by staff is that they do not care or are not interested in their children's education. Additionally, given that English proficiency was found to be a major barrier to parent involvement at Westlee and Grayson, responding to written invitations or correspondence from the school to become involved in some way, was unlikely to occur for the majority of parents. At Westlee and Grayson the traditional face-to-face format of teacher-parent meetings was accepted and remained unchallenged, even though teachers were aware that the greater majority of parents were not proficient in the English language and did not attend such meetings. Interestingly, some teachers deemed some parents to be disinterested in their children's education and others to be approving of school practices and interested in school, with only assumptions to support their beliefs about why parents did not approach teachers.

Teachers identified that an increasing number of families would benefit from a range of counselling services. While the school counsellor performed a vital role in

supporting students with learning and behaviour difficulties, they did not have the time to devote to the issues presented here around parent involvement. At the time this research was conducted there was a counsellor schedule for three days per week at Westlee and two days per week at Grayson. With the workload counsellors undertake to assess students and their limited availability to schools, time did not permit extended consultation about the parent involvement issues that were identified in this study. The study revealed that with neither school having counsellor expertise for a full week, the teaching role included counselling support. Some teachers expressed that they frequently took on the role of counsellor or social worker to support parents. They also expressed that they experienced anxiety, frustration and apprehension on a regular basis due to undertaking these multiple roles. In this study, the teachers were willing and compassionate supporters of parents and their involvement in school but conversely, the identification of the multiple roles teachers undertook, caused them additional stress. In this study, it was found that understanding more about families to support their needs is the crucial step to developing sustainable parent involvement practices, increasing the effectiveness of communication strategies and building better relationships.

Issues around communication and relationships were highlighted as key factors which impacted on the day-to-day interactions between teachers and parents. The implications of these findings are far reaching with the literature defining effective communication (Christianakis, 2011) and building trusted relationships (Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000) as the basic factors of involvement. Interestingly, these key factors were emphasised by the teachers and parents as the two things that they most wanted improved. These two critical factors, when implemented effectively by schools, are the foundation that enables and encourages all parents to become involved in the education of their children. Additionally, this literature provided a way of understanding the behaviours of parents (i.e. withdrawing from school) and school personnel (i.e. relying on assumptions and traditions) in relation to parent involvement in organisations such as schools.

These behaviours as explained by the literature (Christianakis, 2011; Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000; Savage et al., 2010) suggest that trust and power differences between stakeholders present obstacles to effective communication and the building

of trusted relationships. The findings revealed a deficit of self-efficacy for some parents, fostered by a lack of proficiency in English, which exacerbated the power inequity when written or verbal communication became difficult, which can limit the development of trust in relationships. Thus, in this study, these key factors, trusted relationships between teachers and parents, and providing effective written and verbal communication, were interrelated with parent self-efficacy. Diminished self-efficacy, as experienced by some parents in this study, greatly reduced their capacity to become involved in school to support their children's academic and social progress.

While the factors of trust and power exist in a range of schools and organisations, at Westlee and Grayson communication problems in particular were complicated by the high percentage of parents with English as their second language. The CALD composition of these schools was related to the difficulties with communication and relationships experienced by the teachers and most parents in this study. Due to the difficulties for parents who lack proficiency in English or those whose culture perceive parents to be extraneous to the education system (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992) they had little opportunity to alter their circumstances through support strategies provided from within the school. While these factors complicated involvement for the CALD parents at these schools, they were not unique to that group. Communication, relationships and self-efficacy issues were also raised by parents who were proficient English speakers. Therefore, the implications for building relationships and communicating effectively with parents are paramount to encouraging parent involvement in schools to support the social and academic success of students.

Through being involved in the interview process, teachers were able to attend to some of the barriers parents faced to becoming involved in school (such as English proficiency, lack of child care and time and the impact of cultural differences and low parent self-efficacy) and consider how these could become the tools to create a more welcoming environment for parents. Such a tactic represents movement toward the goal of a more inclusive and sustained approach to parent involvement in school.

Thus, attention was directed to identify the perspectives of teachers and parents (Research Question 4) for how to create this new environment in which parent involvement might thrive. Intriguingly, the teachers and parents from Westlee and Grayson held similar views about the issues and barriers to parent involvement and the enablers that might improve their situation. Consistent with the literature, their desire for more effective communication, and opportunities to learn together to build relationships, detailed the very important building blocks for encouraging parent involvement in school education.

The teachers and parents in this study were aware of the existence of community services that could offer support to families by responding to some of the needs that this study identified through the analysis of teacher and parent data. The teachers realised that linking parents with local services and facilities, such as free English language classes, occasional child care facilities and information about local recreation and sporting groups, could provide opportunities to reduce some of the barriers identified earlier. However, as this study found, teacher knowledge of local services was poor. For teachers, this lack of knowledge was a cause of frustration and anxiety. They worried that parents may interpret the time taken to respond to a concern as meaning that they were not taken seriously or that the teacher did not care. Thus, to support teachers' and parents' knowledge of local services and build relationships, learning-together sessions on a shared topic of interest would provide opportunities for them to learn and communicate with one another on an equal level of understanding. These topics of interest would come from the parents' needs and the teachers' understanding of their students and their families.

For example, families might request information about local recreation facilities and the school would organise a representative to come to the school to provide this information to parents in a joint learning-together session with the teachers. In this way, the learning-together approach would provide a platform for mutual discussion which would encourage parent-teacher interaction and relationship building. This research links the perceived needs drawn from the parent and teacher data with the perspectives for change, also taken from the data, and interprets this association with the learning-together approach.

Teachers and some parents understood that professional learning provided teachers with knowledge and skills that would also benefit parents, for example how to construct a PBL teaching framework. Teachers realised that learning-together sessions would provide opportunities to understand information and develop skills *with* parents while building trust and relationships. While getting to know parents, evaluating their needs and gaining knowledge of local services are important considerations, developing these as enablers of a holistic and effective parent involvement process is complicated. However, the teachers and parents in this study reflected on the barriers to parent involvement, and merged these with local services to create joint leaning opportunities which they believed would encourage communication and relationships.

This study found that teachers and parents wanted better relationships and communication with each other, the very factors that the literature (Chrisianakis, 2011; Jenssens & Seynaeve, 2000; Savage et al., 2010) cites as critical for developing involvement within organisations. The anomaly here is that, although teachers and parents were in agreement over encouraging better relationships and communication, access is required to best practice procedural guidelines to enable the better communication and relationships that each regarded as so important. Although a strategic way forward was not apparent to support relationship building and effective communication, surprisingly, teachers and parents generated the idea of learning together to initiate communication and relationships around a common topic of interest.

The teachers predicted that approaching some of the local services to deliver information to the school community would open the door to parent involvement on a number of levels. Linking learning-together sessions with what parents want or need would encourage involvement in the school community. The findings exposed communication and relationship building as elements that teachers and parents wanted improved and the learning-together sessions offered the opportunity to encourage both of these elements. Trusted relationships lead to better communication and understanding, which in turn may support parent self-efficacy. Thus, acquiring knowledge of local services was particularly relevant for the teachers at Westlee and

Grayson, as a link to what parents wanted to know about and to the creation of the learning-together opportunities to develop better relationships and communication.

As previously indicated, education legislation and policies (NSW Education Act, 1990; "Student Discipline in Government Schools" NSW DET, 2006a; "Student Welfare Policy", NSW DET 1996) require schools to engage parents in their decision-making processes. However, for Westlee and Grayson this posed a dilemma. The lack of English proficiency, child care, time and self-efficacy for some parents interfered greatly with their capacity to become effectively involved in PBL or other decision-making activities that support their children's education. Therefore, the idea of joint learning was the beginning of building parent capacity to enable greater parent involvement.

Building the capacity of parents through learning together with teacher sessions, given the CALD composition of these schools and the likelihood that the sessions would be delivered in English, may be considered an inappropriate strategy to adopt. However, this initiative came directly from the teachers and parents and is viewed as having the potential to encourage communication and relationships between parents and teachers in these settings. As the teachers and parents in this study reflected on parent involvement more widely across each of their schools (not just as it related to PBL), the findings from the data supported literature previously cited (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Savage et al., 2010; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Demsey, 2010; Woodrow et al., 2016) that identified relationship building and effective communication as the key foundation factors on which improvement strategies for parent involvement are based. Thus, to improve parent involvement, whether in CALD schools or not, the communication strategies and approaches to relationship building that schools adopt have an effect on parent self-efficacy.

As developed through the analysis of the data, the category of "getting to know" families is the starting point to understanding their individual situations so that ways to accommodate their involvement can be initiated. Providing opportunities for parents to discuss difficulties related to event attendance and communication may give some insight into what is required to improve parent involvement, as Vollmer (2001) discovered. Building parent networks, as supported

by this study, may bridge the communication gap for some parents who have difficulty with the English language, and provide opportunities for trustworthy child care links to be formed. Some parents may feel less intimidated to ask questions of other parents than to contact the school, as is shown in this study. Such a facilitated connection may support these parents in ways that promote greater confidence and less anxiety as they learn to understand school processes. Understanding how to provide more effective communication and build better relationships with parents comes from "getting to know" them as individuals and as part of a family. As the finding from this research and the literature affirm, when schools initiate processes to do this the foundations for improving parent involvement are established.

Although the learning-together sessions promoted these key factors of parent involvement, teacher professional learning is suggested by the literature (Epstein, 2005b; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Malone, 2015; Woodrow et al., 2016) as the first step in the process to understanding the importance of involving parents in school. Further to this, in the quest to improve parent involvement, the literature (Epstein, 2001; Walker et al., 2010) states that the provision of best practice guidelines and resources would ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of any action.

Creating a school-based strategy to improve parent involvement is complex and includes addressing a variety of barriers, as this study shows. Without the appropriate tools to reveal these barriers to parent involvement, they may remain hidden or obscured by assumptions. Khanal (2013) urged that the current state of tokenistic parent involvement be replaced by effective parent participation which respects the diversity that parents bring to the school. This emphasises the need for teacher professional learning to understand the importance of parent involvement in school to further support the social and academic success of students. As this research emphasises, best practice guidelines and procedures are required to enable schools to plan for the involvement of parents in school. Without such knowledge and support structures, the current state of traditional and tokenistic approaches to involving parents is likely to continue.

This study reinforces that designing strategies to improve parent involvement is complex due to the unique composition of individual school communities. Thus,

strategies to improve and support parent involvement should consider the unique context of schools, with a cyclic review as a quality assurance measure and to sustain the involvement of parents over time. The findings showed that teachers believed parents were most enthusiastic about school and education when they enrolled a child in Kindergarten. Therefore, the cycle would commence with the parents of Kindergarten children and proceed to involve each new cohort in each following year. In this way, schools that implement this parent involvement strategy would remain agile and responsive to increasing parent involvement in schools building on local knowledge of a school's unique context. To elaborate on the importance of a cyclic process, at Westlee and Grayson, parent English proficiency was not always an issue but this had changed over a number of years. The changing ethnicity of the school population created complications around verbal and written communication, building trusted relationships, and parent self-efficacy which had previously not existed. Thus, the traditional ways that schools provided information and involved parents were no longer as effective or as efficient as they had been. Therefore, this research promotes a cyclic review process to understand new cohorts of parents. This approach will highlight any changes and enable more appropriate strategies to be introduced to support the continued involvement of parents in school.

The first year of formal schooling was identified by Brotman et al., (2011) and Kolbert et al., (2014) as the most beneficial time to apply interventions to support families to improve the social and academic performance of children. Congruent with this literature, the teachers in this study suggested that Kindergarten, being the first year of formal schooling, was the most strategic time to encourage parent involvement as parents were eager to learn about the school and the opportunities for their children. The introduction of check-lists and parent interviews prior to children starting Kindergarten may provide information that will help schools organise support and strategies to welcome families to the new environment of school. Interviews and checklists may echo insensitivity when trying to build relationships with parents. However, it may be pointed out to parents that to promote the positive social and academic development for their children, it is necessary to support the parents in ways that strengthen their capacity to become involved in school.

Parent involvement in school is required by the NSW DoE as specified in the policies and legislation (NSW DET, 1996, 2006a; NSW Education Act, 1990). The expectation is that school leaders and teachers know and understand the important contribution parents make to school and especially to their children's academic and social performance in that environment. This knowledge is not instinctive, and the literature targets teacher professional learning as the beginning of a plan for successful parent involvement. Any process is enhanced when instruction, procedural guidelines and resources are available to support the efficacy and sustainability of that process. This research found that some parents lacked the confidence, self-efficacy, and skills to ask a question at school, or to become involved in PBL or other decision-making processes. These factors limited their capacity to become involved at any level, including providing the school with feedback on a learning intervention or issue of concern.

Demonstrating to parents that schools promote parent involvement, by addressing their need for knowledge and understanding of the things that are important to them, helps to break down the barriers that this and other studies (Poza et al., 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016) have revealed. The interpretation of the data justified the learning-together sessions as a way to reduce the power inequity between parents and teachers, support better relationships, more effective communication and facilitate parent confidence to become involved in school processes and activities. Thus, over time, parent self-efficacy may also benefit from this inclusive, needs-based approach to parent involvement.

In response to Research Question 3, a variety of barriers were identified that inhibited parent involvement at Westlee and Grayson. English proficiency, the first of these barriers, affected parent self-confidence and their ability to engage with teachers. Teachers also articulated a level of frustration with parents' English proficiency when a child interpreted information for them or when parents did not attend parent–teacher conferences. Parents' hours of work and lack of trustworthy child care also interfered with the time they had available to attend school activities. Thus, the main issues which affected parent involvement in school processes and activities were found to be a lack of effective communication (to understand the

issues) and time for relationship building between the teachers and the parents (developing a level of trust).

The issues around communication and relationships, rather than remaining inhibitors to parent involvement, became transposed into the enablers to improve the situation. This occurred through the use of reflective listening and the open-ended questioning which enabled analysis of the perspectives to improve parent involvement. In response to Research Question 4, learning-together sessions were proposed as a way to build relationships and communication between teachers and parents by connecting with local services to address some of the issues. Such learning-together sessions may contribute to an increase in parent self-efficacy and parent-to-parent relationships which may also in turn support solutions to some of the issues identified in this study. As a precursor to understanding the barriers to parent involvement, in school initiatives such as PBL and other activities, and recommending practices to overcome those barriers, teacher professional learning about the importance of parent involvement is identified in the literature (Epstein, 2005b; Woodrow et al., 2016) as a catalyst for improving parent involvement in schools.

Consideration of Existing Research and Implications for the Future

Although previous studies (Khanal, 2013; Mytton et al., 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016) have made similar findings with regard to parent involvement in schools and programs generally, to my knowledge this is the first Australian study to examine parent involvement in PBL. A recent study by Yeung et al., (2016) which examined the sustainability of the positive effects of behaviour interventions does not refer to parent involvement. In that study, the only reference to parents is the observation that "the students' point card is often sent home for parent review" (p. 148). The question remains how involved were the parents in that intervention? With regard to the sustainability of positive effects, would parent involvement make a significant difference? To understand if parent involvement in school and education can improve the effectiveness of interventions, such as PBL, assessment of the current state of parent involvement in PBL and in schools more widely is required.

As this research study is the first of its kind to examine parent involvement in PBL, further studies will assist in answering those questions.

The implications of this research extend beyond parent involvement in PBL. The findings suggest that if policy is deficient in providing guidelines for involving parents then schools will continue to persist with assumptions to guide their practices. The provision of information and the tokenistic approach to involvement will continue and opportunities for all parents to build relationships, engage in discussion and decision-making and feel in equal partnership with teachers will remain lacking. Although the focus of this research was parent involvement in PBL, the findings show that involvement begins at a different place for individual parents. It is these places that schools must understand and accommodate if equitable and respectful parent involvement is to grow.

As previously stated in the literature review, legislation (NSW Education Act, 1990) DoE policies ("Student Discipline in Government Schools", NSW DET 2006a; "Student Welfare Policy", NSW DET 1996; The National Safe Schools Framework, 2011) emphasise the importance of involving parents in the education of their children. These policies also articulate that parents have a shared responsibility for educating their children with teachers (NSW DET, 2006b). Policy statements do not however, create the conditions for teachers or parents to want to improve opportunities for parents to become involved in school. The findings from this study demonstrate that a shared responsibility for educating children requires the building the capacity of teachers and parents to become knowledgeable about the benefits for all stakeholders when parents are involved in the education of their children. Building capacity, particularly of the parents, is helpful but does not guarantee that they will want to be involved to a greater extent than they already are. Nevertheless, the findings from this study indicate that, given the opportunity, strategies can be established to address the barriers to parent involvement identified by the teachers and the parents at Westlee and Grayson.

Given this insight, it is important to examine existing parent involvement models to establish the features and strategies that might support all school contexts in the development of a parent involvement plan that is sustainable over time.

Table 22 summarises the existing models for understanding aspects of parent involvement (Dunst, Trivette & Deal, 1994; Epstein, 2005a; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Moore et al., 2016) however, these models do not provide the practical strategies necessary to develop it.

Table 21: Parent Involvement Model Review

Author	Investigated	Model inclusions and considerations
Epstein (2001)	Types of involvement	Volunteering – school recruiting and organisation Home learning – curriculum support and information, and homework Parenting – family support programs Communicating – identify and integrate community services Decision-making – committee responsibilities
Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, (1995)	Influences on parent involvement	Motivation variables – self-efficacy, time, skills, knowledge and culture Relationships between – parents and children and parents and school / teachers Beliefs – parent involvement makes a difference
Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005)	Building on the known influences on parent involvement	Strategies to build school's capacity to involve parents Strategies to build parent capacity to become involved Further research needed on **how** parent self-efficacy may be supported
Hirano & Rowe, (2016)	High School Model in Special Education	Schools – to understand and believe that parent involvement is important and can make a difference Communication – must be effective across the parent population Programs – staff actively support parent involvement activities
Moore et al., (2016)	Multitiered Family Support Approach in Middle School	Family strengths and needs assessment conducted at the beginning of the school year Essentially parents rated their child in areas where they may need support Linked with the School-wide Positive Behaviour Support system
Dunst, Trivette & Deal, (1994)	Family-Centred Approach in Early Childhood	Base interventions on family's identified needs Obtain and mobilise resources Empower families to develop competencies

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) investigated what motivated parents to become involved in their children's schooling. The motivation variables identified in their study, parent self-efficacy, time, skills and culture, mirror those from this study. Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) considered the strategies that may support these variables, being the building of the school's capacity to involve parents and the parents' capacity to become involved with the school and education. Both these areas of capacity building were identified by this study as valuable contributors to involving parents. Epstein (2001) investigated the different types of parent involvement. Volunteering, for example, was identified in the present study and assumed to be linked to the motivation variables. Hirano and Rowe (2016) state that school staff must understand the importance of involving parents through professional learning and be active supporters of parent involvement activities. The present study noted that parents wanted staff to be involved with them in learning together across topics of interest, such as transition to high school and community facilities to support the needs of families. Moore et al., (2016) expanded on the family strengths and needs assessment, however their model related particularly to student behaviour in middle school and the linking of parents to agency support based on their self-assessment data. Dunst et al., (1994) in developing a model for family-centred practice in early childhood settings stated that identifying family needs, obtaining relevant resources and empowering families by developing their competencies were necessary components. Communicating effectively and nurturing relationships are mentioned in these models as significant factors to improving parent involvement, but the "how to do this" to encourage parents to become involved is still the elusive goal for all. Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) claim that parent involvement is influenced by the actions of schools in response to parent variables therefore, the variables must become known to the school for purposeful actions to follow. These existing models of parent involvement (Dunst et al., 1994; Epstein, 2001; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Moore et al., 2016) were examined to find elements that could be applied to a new model that could be adapted to suit the contexts of mainstream schools in Australia to encourage and enhance parent involvement for the betterment of student achievement.

As mentioned previously, the initial aim of this research was to examine the extent and nature of parent involvement in PBL. The findings herewith show, that for parents to become involved in PBL and other school initiatives, schools require access to particular context specific data before parent involvement strategies can be initiated to achieve this result.

Practical Applications of the Study to Facilitate Improved Parent Involvement – STIPI Model

Development of the STIPI Model

As a consequence of synthesising the theories, literature and findings examined during the course of this study, a new model for schools to improve parent involvement (STIPI) is proposed. According to the literature presented in Table 22, many aspects of parent involvement, such as volunteering, have been identified. Additionally, the literature in Table 22 indicates that parent motivation variables (e.g. self-efficacy) also affected parents' involvement in school. Further to the above aspects of parent involvement, the literature supports staff professional learning to ensure their understanding of the important role parents play in the academic and social progress of their children. These aspects (volunteering, parent self-efficacy, etc.) are noteworthy because they highlight what should be considered to support parent involvement. However, these models do not discuss the "how" to encourage, establish and sustain these over time. The outcome from this research study was the development of the STIPI model which explains the practical steps school personnel can take to improve parent involvement.

Building parent capacity, to enable them to become involved in school, by identifying their needs and mobilising resources to meet those needs is a substantial component of this new approach to improve parent involvement. The STIPI model has a focus on the "what" and emphasises the "how to do it", in preparation for and for the sustainability of parent involvement in schools. It must be stressed that the teaching staff at Westlee and Grayson were committed practitioners who relied on traditional means to determine the most appropriate ways to engage individual families with school practices. The findings from this study provided the foundations

for the new model to implement practices based on factual information rather than reliance on traditional approaches to involving parents and assumptions to guide and improve parent involvement in schools. The importance of doing this is emphasised in the literature review by previous research, theoretical understandings and the NSW DoE policies.

The STIPI model developed by the author responds to the literature, the findings from this study and education policy, merged with an understanding of the PBL framework (see Chapter three). As with PBL, STIPI is underpinned by multiple theoretical perspectives. Learning, behaviour, collaboration and stakeholder theories are combined to position a new theoretical understanding of how parent involvement might be improved, based on the collection of school and parent data. This data then enables planning for improved parent involvement based on contextually specific information. A plan to develop parent involvement from specific contextual data is more likely to succeed than one which is based on a school's assumption of parents' capacity or willingness to become involved in PBL or other school-related activity.

During the development of the STIPI model it was important for the researcher to understand: the enablers and barriers to involving parents (Bambara et al., 2009; Mytton et al., 2014); building relationships in CALD communities (Hosley, Gensheimer & Yang, 2003; Poza et al., 2014); the influence of parent stress, motivation and self-efficacy (Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000; Semke et al., 2010; Short, 2016); and connecting with families (Ferguson, 2008; Sawyer, 2015). Equally important was the review of policies within Australia (NSW Education Act, 1990) and the United States (No Child Left Behind Act, of 2001) (https://www.ed.gov) regarding the importance of parent involvement.

The conceptual model for family engagement presented by Garbacz et al., (2016) revealed some of the features noted above, such as providing evidence through data collection, effective communication, teacher training, developing consistent routines and strategies for teaching and learning at home and at school, and developing trust with parents. However, the conceptual model targets parent involvement in PBIS by forming a parent representative group to interact with other parents and to communicate with the PBIS school team. In comparison, the findings

from this study, draws on an understanding of parent capacity to become directly involved in school decision-making and the building of self-efficacy and relationships with parents for the purpose of supporting the academic and social progress of students.

The STIPI model outlines parent involvement from the earliest possible point of intervention, the first year of formal schooling. The purpose is to build on the enthusiasm and aspirations that new parents bring to the school and for their children's education. To sustain this parent enthusiasm for the shared responsibility of education, teacher professional learning about the importance of parent involvement is the essential introduction for school leaders and teachers. While the STIPI model does not target parent involvement in PBL specifically, the findings showed that for teachers and parents, relationships, communication and parent self-efficacy were areas of concern, and that these should be developed to enable support for and involvement in PBL implementation.

Epstein (2005a) states that guidelines for parent involvement need to provide professional learning around the importance of parents and examples of involvement activities which are critical to the process. If these elements are not present then school involvement practices may not be effective or sustainable. Section 1118(a)(2) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (titled "Parental Involvement") contains a notable provision on this point:

> Each local educational agency…shall develop jointly with…parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy. The policy shall…describe how the agency will —
>
> (B) provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
>
> (C) build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parent involvement;
>
> (E) conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement

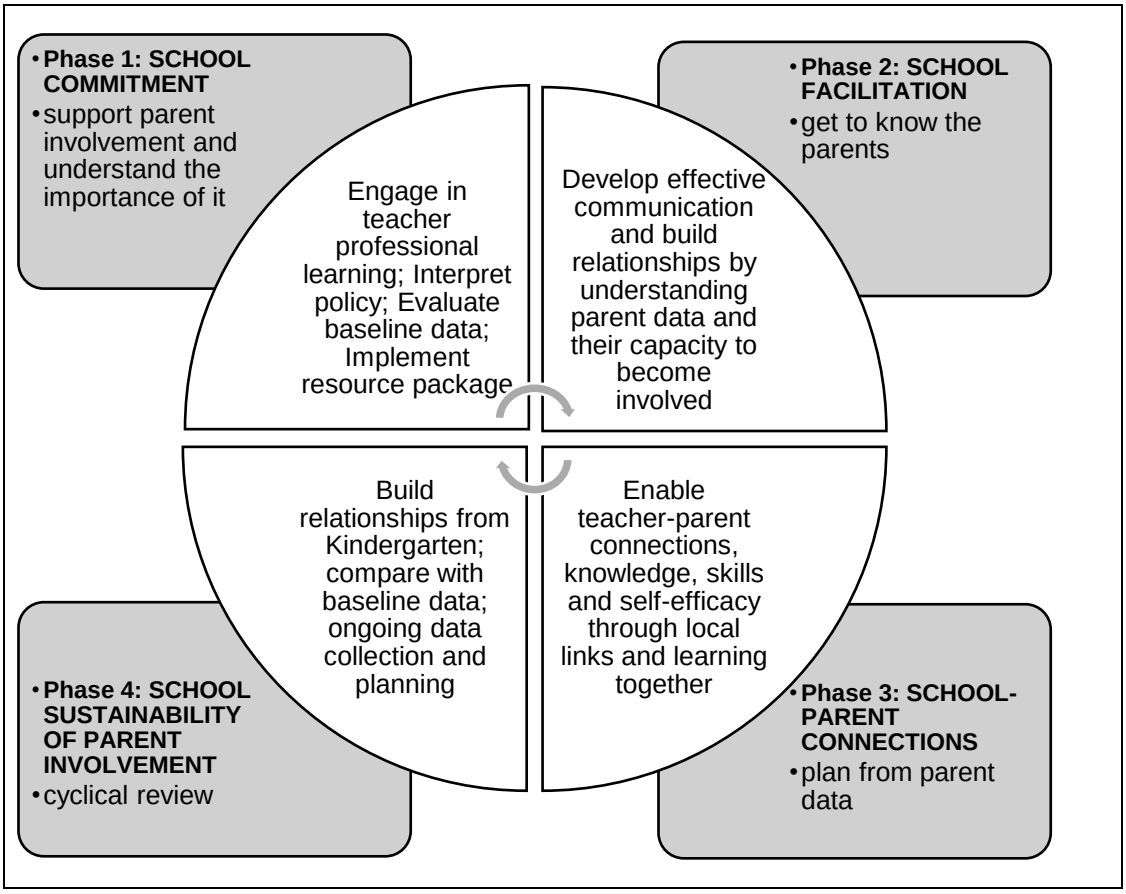
> policy…including the identifying barriers to greater participation by parents…(with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background), and use the findings of such evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement (https://www.ed.gov).

Although acknowledging that a legal requirement to involve parents in the education of their children had shown gains in reading and maths, Epstein (2005a) stated that modifications were needed by way of identifying the means by which parent involvement will be improved.

In Australia, a willingness to involve parents in school by providing a policy that outlines the importance of parents is insufficient to satisfy the involvement implied by legislation (e.g. NSW Education Act, 1990). Considering that the literature (Christianakis, 2011; Janssens & Seynaeve, 2000; Savage et al., 2010) cites effective communication and relationships as the building blocks for successful parent involvement, it is appropriate that teachers "getting to know parents" (see Chapter eight) is a critical feature of any move to stimulate and improve parent involvement in schools.

Epstein (2013) stated that "there is a big gap between knowing and doing" (p. 115) when it comes to involving parents in school. Therefore, it is necessary to connect, in more practical terms, the "knowing" that parents should be involved, to the most appropriate and effective ways of "doing" it. Procedural guidelines are important to enable schools to develop and plan strategies to improve parent involvement over time. With consideration given to the intention of policy, the literature, findings from this study and the PBL implementation framework, Figure 5 represents the four phases and the cyclic process of the STIPI model.

Figure 5: Theoretical Model for Schools to Improve Parent Involvement (STIPI)



Prior to detailing the content of each of the phases, it is important to clarify that it is not within the scope of this thesis to test and report on the reliability or effectiveness of this model to improve parent involvement in schools. Nevertheless, my engagement with this research project, the examination of interventions which had successfully involved parents, the literature, and the theories, all have led to the development of this new theoretical model as a planning tool to encourage and improve parent involvement in schools.

Phase 1: School Commitment

Phase 1 is essentially about school personnel. Adams, Forsyth and Mitchell (2009) state that entrenched policies, practices and traditions make it difficult to change school culture. However, the culture of a school can be persuaded to change if strong leadership is the driving force (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Giles & Bills, 2017). Therefore, understanding the importance of involving parents in school,

through professional learning (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Standards 7.3 and 7.4; Epstein, 2005b; Woodrow et al., 2016) is a crucial beginning for schools wanting to improve parent involvement. Once the commitment is made by a school to improve parent involvement, support is provided and a resource package supplied and discussed to assist the school with the collection of data to assess the best approach for that school to take to involve parents more in the education of their children.

The collection of baseline data is important to explain the existing nature and extent of parent involvement in the school. Subsequently, further data collection tools support the school to gather information that will encourage new and innovative approaches to involving parents, according to what they need to support themselves, their children or the family as a whole. This data is crucial to understanding parents and planning for their equitable involvement in school. The tools provided are a template to stimulate ideas with the modification of these resources expected, to suit a particular context.

Data collection is necessary to enable the evaluation of the impact of the strategic interventions and processes implemented over time. As this research indicated, parents of Kindergarten children are the most interested and keen to be involved in school. Therefore, data collection begins with the new cohort of parents. A parent interview and/or checklist provides general information about the family and the child from which a summary may detail areas of need. Teachers may also add notes which collectively may be used to engage local services to support parents, students and teachers to facilitate the communication processes necessary to build ongoing relationships. Information about a family's ethnicity will become known when the child is initially enrolled in school. Through this initial contact the school can make the appropriate decision to engage a translator if necessary. Every effort needs to be made at this point to translate for those parents who are not proficient in English, to enable their inclusion in this process.

Phase 2: School Facilitation

Phase 2 of a strategic plan to move forward with parent involvement begins with taking baseline data. This data consists of the types of activities that are available for parents to become involved in and the number of parents who are actually involved in those activities at the present time. Appropriate forward planning is supported by the evaluation of the data from the parent interview and/or checklist and teacher notes (from Phase 1). Genuine support can only be offered to families if assumptions about parent capacity to become involved in school are differentiated from the reality that exists for families. Data fields will develop in accordance with the school context. For example, with Westlee and Grayson, effective communication and English proficiency were critical data to be considered, whereas a school with only English speakers may need to consider the communication aspect differently. These data are used to link the interests, wants and needs of families to community services that can respond to these. The joint learning activities planned from this information helps to encourage communication and relationships between school staff and the parent body.

Regardless of the ethnic diversity or the socio-economic status of a school, parent vulnerabilities are lessened when schools address the affective needs of parents (Adams et al., 2009). Thus, a focus on building parents' capabilities, through assessing the available data and implementing appropriate strategies, is an important part of this process. It is purported that the data will scaffold tiered levels of parent involvement, from those who need to build their capacity (and/or self-efficacy) to enable further involvement to those who are confident to accept a decision-making role as a committee member.

Phase 3: School-Parent Connections

Phase 3 is the planning phase for the "learning-together sessions". Information about groups of parents with the same interests, culture, language or needs cultivate the links to community services and resources. These data not only support the endeavours of schools to involve parents but also encourage the development of parent networks, also identified by this research as a helpful

mechanism to encourage parent involvement. Getting to know parents and families in this way enables a clearer understanding of their communication needs, thus supporting relationships, the two critical elements to improve parent involvement. Data analysis is a useful planning tool to confirm phenomena, by collating these data, plans can be targeted to what parents want, encouraging their participation. For example, what capacity building activities are needed and what internal and external resources or services can provide for these? Are different levels of parent involvement identified to enable more parents to be involved in school activities? Any improvement in parent involvement can be compared to the baseline conditions and linked to the planning strategies. Involvement via individual school's internet applications may also be considered, to support parents who have little time to be physically present at school.

Phase 4: School Sustainability of Parent Involvement

Phase 4 is important to consider in relation to the intent of education policy to create a shared responsibility for educating children. Building parent skills and capacity is important to enable parents to become active decision-makers on school committees and teams. Thus, developing effective communication systems and strategies, trusted relationships and parent self-efficacy through learning together, all support an ongoing culture of knowledge and power sharing which, with commitment, will strengthen over the years. The cyclic review of strategies and levels of parent involvement are important to compare with the interests and needs of each new cohort of parents. This process highlights any changes that may need to be addressed to engage parents more with the joint vision for educating their children.

Cyclic Nature

The STIPI model represents a series of processes which are replicated over time. Initially, evaluating the data and linking these to local services is the process of creating the learning-together sessions. This information can then be effectively communicated to families using methods most suitable to reach all parents. Once parents become familiar with the learning-together cycle, they may become initiators of learning-together topics from networking with other parents. When teachers and

parents learn together, communication is supported through the topic, relationships are built and an equal status is developed through this connected learning activity. For example, activities such as sporting opportunities, art and cultural activities as well as activities available through the local library, in which parents or their children may like to participate, may be a topic of interest for some school communities. A joint learning session on this topic to begin the school year may be a way of encouraging parent involvement and indicating to parents that the school is attentive to parent input and consultation.

The cyclic nature of the STIPI requires Phase 4 to be followed by revisiting the data collected in Phase 1. Data are taken to compare parent attendance and involvement in school over time with the initial baseline data estimated from the previous year unless records have been kept. Parent involvement in school processes like PBL or policy development may not be readily apparent, as parent self-efficacy and capacity building may need to be improved through collaborative communication and relationship building activities. Once trust in relationships has been generated and effective lines of communication have been established, parent input into policy development, problem-solving and general school activities is likely to increase if nurtured by school personnel. These procedures will support a whole school approach to developing better parent involvement by understanding what is in place, what needs to change and that parent involvement can make a significant difference to students' academic and social performance. The changes that schools will make, given this theoretical model as a guide, are based on knowledge from their own contextual data rather than opinions, assumptions or traditions.

Importantly, for the model to be effected with fidelity it is critical that its use be explicitly stated in the school plan and particular school staff given the responsibility for its implementation.

The STIPI model is not a quick-fix strategy to improve parent involvement. It is viewed as a long-term approach to develop the appropriate processes for a particular context that are vital to the success of a parent involvement plan. Teachers and parents together need to understand the unique issues that exist in their schools, and collaborate to provide interventions that do not disadvantage or segregate but

build the capacity for all parents to have the opportunity to participate in the life of the school and the education of their children.

Implications for Policy

In 2008 The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources /National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf) was signed by all the state Ministers for Education across Australia. Goal 2 states that "all young Australians become successful learners…[and] active and informed citizens… achieving the goal is the collective responsibility of governments, schools and families" (p.3). This Declaration acknowledges that:

> parents, carers and families are the first and most important influence in a child's life, instilling the attitudes and values that will support young people to participate in schooling…Partnerships between families, the broader community and schools…maximise student engagement and achievements (p.10).

Implicit in this statement is that when a child begins school, parents have a shared responsibility with teachers to positively affect the academic and social outcomes of that child in their care. Thus, the NSW DoE reflects this understanding in a number of its documents and policies ("Student Discipline in Government Schools" NSW DET, 2006a; "Student Welfare Policy", NSW DET 1996; The National Safe Schools Framework, 2011; "Quality Teaching to support the NSW Professional Teaching Standards", NSW DET, 2008). The goals for adopting the whole-school-based PBL process (NSW DET, 2006b) include that parents be active participants in the decision-making process and share educative responsibilities with the school to support their commitment to student academic and social well-being. The PBL website (www.pbl.schools.nsw.edu.au) suggests that parents become a member of the school team to be engaged in the development of rules and procedures. At Westlee and Grayson this was not the case, but it was the intention of these schools to involve the parents. The implication for policy is to enable schools not only to understand the intention but also to actively promote and improve parent involvement through the provision of best practice guidelines.

An abundance of literature describes parents as the primary influence on a child's early social, emotional and academic performance (Ainsworth, 1979; Bradshaw et al., 2006; Brotman et al., 2011; Kim & Page, 2013; Kocayörük, 2010; Valdez et al., 2005). However, while the literature, PBL and DoE policies are clear about parents being active participants in every school community, the findings from this study tell a complicated story about parent involvement in two Western Sydney schools. The intention here, is not to target the semantics between the policy language (participation, engagement, involvement) but to elaborate the understandings of their interconnected nature when analysing best practice parent involvement strategies. While policy mandates parent involvement in schools, and documents use research and literature to endorse the importance of parent involvement, it is the responsibility of individual schools to apply their knowledge and understanding to ensure this occurs.

The curriculum and support documents, for example, give clear explanations of what should be taught, examples of lessons and activities and the expected outcomes. However, the critical aspects of involving parents in school decision-making and supporting their children academically remain unexplained in policy documents, with little support by way of procedural guidelines to enable schools to actively follow through with strategies to encourage the equitable involvement of all parents. The literature also states that pre-service and practising teachers should be provided with professional learning to develop the skills associated with engaging parents in school (Epstein, 2013; Poza et al., 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016). Hence, the STIPI theoretical model was developed to address this need.

The findings of this study, with regard to parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely, are supported by Khanal (2013) who acknowledged that a gap exists between policy intention and policy implementation. Therefore, it is essential to provide teachers with the necessary professional learning and policies that are accompanied by the necessary procedural guidelines to ensure policy statements are first understood, and second exemplified by best practice guidelines informed by research.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

This research study provided insights into improving parent involvement in schools however, all studies have their limitations. Although two schools were included in this study and parents, teachers and students were represented from each setting, the findings cannot be generalised to all schools. Parent response to the invitation to participate in this study was limited even though parents were given a variety of options to do so. The parent community from each school was provided with general information about the study. However, some parents may not have been aware of PBL or may have had a negative view of the system, and thus declined to participate. Therefore, some of the analysis may be skewed towards a positive perception under these conditions. The lack of English proficiency or the parent self-efficacy issues identified in this study may have contributed to the willingness of more parents to participate.

The parents who participated in this study expressed that they valued what the PBL rules were reinforcing with their children, to be mindful of safety, to be respectful to others and to be an interested learner. Therefore, the parent perspective represented here is that of parents who reinforced the PBL rules with their children. The parents who declined to participate in this study may well have another perspective if their children have been challenged by the PBL rules with consequences being applied in the school environment.

During the student focus group interviews, the older students in all of the groups led the conversation, with the younger students agreeing in response. The older students were comfortable to "personalise" their responses whereas the younger ones contributed less to the overall discussion. Even though a small pilot was completed, this outcome was not anticipated and may reflect researcher inexperience. The purposeful sampling of students in future studies may be more appropriate when researching detailed elements or processes of PBL within specific school contexts. The student participants required parent permission to be involved and therefore their positive responses to PBL may have reflected that of their parents and not be representative of the majority of the students at Westlee and Grayson.

Although the barriers to parent involvement corresponded to those identified in other studies, without a much larger sample size from each school it remains unknown whether the perceived barriers and enablers noted here reflect that of the whole parent body. Additionally, as already stated, the perceptions noted under each of the five main categories pertain to the same small sample population, thus, they may not reflect the views of the greater parent body of either school. Regardless of this limitation, the findings were very similar across the two schools in this study, and thus provide a level of confidence that the data are representative of the nature and extent of parent involvement in PBL, and more widely across these schools, that existed at that time. A greater number of schools from a more diverse demographic area may have shown different or more complex findings. However, it was not possible to undertake such a project given the time needed to access numerous sites and complete the extensive data collection and analysis that such a study would have required.

As noted in Chapter one, the researcher was the facilitating PBL coach in Westlee and Grayson at the time the data were gathered, and this may be considered a limitation. Teachers may have been influenced by the researcher's position and their professional relationship with the researcher. Their responses may thus be biased toward a positive perception of PBL. However, the data regarding parent involvement are considered to be a valid interpretation of the nature and extent of parent involvement in PBL implementation in Westlee and Grayson, given that the findings were triangulated with artefacts provided by each of the schools.

An important outcome from this research was the realisation that to involve parents in PBL decision-making processes, on school teams, and in school more widely requires schools to get to know their parents and review their data annually. These data are used to plan strategic parent involvement activities to encourage communication and relationships between teachers and parents. This means building parent capacity to be involved in school and encouraging parents to engage in problem-solving activities with teachers. Capacity building can only be achieved if the school understands the barriers that inhibit involvement. Thus, this research has laid the groundwork for the further development of the STIPI theoretical model to improve parent involvement in schools.

The main strength of this study is its contribution to understanding the scope of parent involvement in PBL implementation in two schools in an Australian context. Additionally, this study enabled the researcher to generate a fresh approach for improving parent involvement in schools from the findings herewith and the extensive reading across theories and research literature. As PBL becomes more widespread across Australia, it is necessary to analyse the processes across each of the three tiers and engage in research to understand how the tiers work in various settings to improve practices and sustainability. Despite the importance of parent involvement stated here, it remains unknown if parent involvement in PBL will improve students' social and academic outcomes. From rural schools to those in the city, from those in low socio-economic areas to those more advantaged, research is an important tool to understand the reality for people in context and develop ways to represent that reality in practice.

Thus, to enable better parent involvement in PBL and school more widely, teachers acknowledged that they required various resources and skills to support parent involvement. Additionally, parents identified their concerns and ideas for change to facilitate communication and relationships to improve parent involvement. Such understanding respects and empowers parents and provides an awareness through which all stakeholders can begin to communicate more effectively and build trusted relationships.

Summary

Cassidy and Shaver (1999) suggest that there are many influences that interact over time to affect the behaviour of a human being, and providing appropriate support can have a positive impact on the outcome for both adults and children. As teachers and parents are significant adults in the life of a child, it is important to understand how relationships between these two influence the social and learning outcomes for that child. To enable a student to develop the self-efficacy, to perform socially and academically to the best of their ability, it is critical to support the adults in their lives with appropriate knowledge. When adult behaviour is predictable, as PBL provides, children learn to respond more positively as they understand the consequences of their behaviour. Thus, to build the capacity of

parents to become involved in PBL may help them to feel less anxious and more able to interact with their children more predictably.

The analysis emphasises that parents were informed about decisions rather than being involved in the decision-making. The essential knowing of individual family needs, the knowledge of local services to support these needs, and a flexible approach to coordinating resources to encourage involvement, which may include cross-school collaboration, all have the potential to support parents and teachers. Nir (2009) asserts that educational processes would be more effective if there were increased sensitivity to the needs of the local school community and flexible approaches to fulfilling those needs. This sensitivity to need must be driven by professional learning and research-based evidence, not assumptions. Anything other than this would not deliver an accurate response to that need.

The enablement of parent involvement through learning together with teachers connects well with the foundations for involvement, namely, communicating effectively and building trusted relationships. When parents feel understood and supported, the foundations are in place to build parent capacity to become more involved in the academic and social well-being of their children at school and at home. The literature states that students would be the beneficiaries, socially and academically, of a coordinated approach to involving parents in school. This research shows that parents and teachers would also benefit. Parents would benefit from the support offered by the school, local services and other parents. Providing professional learning to teachers about how to support parents to engage with school and having the knowledge of local services to support parents may reduce a teacher's stress and frustration at having to take on multiple support roles.

Although this research, as with any research study, has its limitations, the development of the STIPI model has considered multiple theoretical perspectives to nurture a new direction for policy and practice with regard to improving parent involvement in school events and decision-making activities by supporting the parents' capacity to do so.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

> If a community values its children it must cherish its parents
> (Bowlby, 1951, p. 84).

Introduction

The initial aim of this study was to examine parent involvement in PBL in two primary schools in South Western Sydney, Australia. Positive Behaviour for Learning is a proactive and preventative approach for schools to teach positive social and academic behaviour to promote successful student learning outcomes. Chapters two and three review the literature about parent involvement in the lives of their children, to encourage positive social interactions, academic achievement, and to support their successful life outcomes. The NSW DoE concurs that the involvement of parents in the education of their children is important for positive social and academic growth. As a result of this concurrence, education policies and PBL endorse the involvement of parents. This research was initiated in response to a desire to understand the scope of parent involvement in schools that implemented PBL. However, the analysis of the data produced findings about parents and their relationships to schools beyond PBL implementation. It was found that parents require a range of supports and schools require guidelines and procedures, to improve parent involvement in PBL and in school more widely.

The findings from this study demonstrated that when a child begins school, the language and culture of that school may unintentionally alienate some parents and affiliate others in the shared responsibility to educate the next generation. Due to the important role of parents in the lives of their children and the paucity of research into parent involvement in PBL, it was fundamental to investigate the inclusion of parents throughout PBL implementation.

Summary of Key Findings

Initial findings showed that all participating stakeholders valued the teaching and learning of the PBL rules (be safe, be respectful and be a learner) adopted by the participating schools, and the consistency with which they were reinforced. Parent acceptance of PBL systems had grown vicariously, through the knowledge and understanding passed on through newsletters, assembly announcements and from their children. Contrary to the experience of parents, teachers perceived that parents had been involved throughout the PBL implementation decision-making process. The evidence from this research showed that parents had been informed of decisions after they had been finalised by the PBL team. As a consequence, it was found that teachers had misinterpreted the intention of policy around parent involvement, and the shared responsibility that this implies, through beliefs and assumptions.

When a child begins formal schooling, their social understandings and valuing of education are either reinforced by, or estranged from, those promoted by the school. The intention of education Legislation (NSW Education Act, 1990) and policies (NSW DET, 1996; NSW DET, 2006a) is to engage parents with the social and academic expectations of schooling. As this study demonstrated, although DoE policies and PBL literature recognise the important role of parents, they could provide explicit guidelines to enable schools to involve parents, and accommodate varying school contexts that change over time by establishing a cyclic review process. Therefore, the reliance on traditions and the assumptions about parents, alienate some parents who consequently withdraw from interacting with teachers, and affiliate others who may dominate parent opinion in decision-making processes.

The key findings provided clarity about certain aspects of the parent involvement dilemma that existed at Westlee and Grayson schools. This research determined that to involve parents in PBL decision-making processes, it is important for teachers to understand the capacity of parents to do so. In this study, two key factors were identified that are pivotal to enabling parent involvement. These were to provide effective communication and to build trusted relationships with parents. A key stakeholder factor in both schools was their high percentage of parents who were not proficient in the English language, so, the provision of effective communication

was a high priority. This is a condition for establishing strategies that can be applied to build trusted relationships with all parents. These two factors, effective communication and building relationships, are the foundation for the promotion of parent involvement in all organisations including schools.

The teachers from Westlee and Grayson considered that the promotion of parent involvement would likely be more successful if it was introduced as a priority in Kindergarten, which is the first year of formal schooling in NSW. This finding connected with the literature, and regardless of the difficulties with communication and parent-teacher relationships, learning-together sessions were proposed as a way forward to encourage relationships and communication between teachers and parents. The idea of teachers and parents learning together about a topic of interest is considered to be a way to reduce the power inequity sometimes present between teachers and parents, particularly in areas where parents are from different cultural backgrounds.

Savage et al., (2010) suggest that power differences and lack of trust in relationships negatively affects efforts for people to collaborate. A point that Christianakis (2011) makes is "school communities that use the empowerment models, construct parent involvement based on local needs within the community and by involving parents in multiple levels of decision making" (p. 161). From the comparative analysis of the teacher and parent data on their perspectives to improve parent involvement in schools, emerged the category learning-together that reduces the power differences (actual or perceived) between teachers and parents. Janssens and Seynaeve (2000) when discussing the rights of stakeholders in organisations such as schools talk about being empowered to problem solve. Learning together is a practice which links to stakeholder theory and is a strategy for the parents and teachers at Westlee and Grayson to initiate trusting relationships, communication, collaboration and problem-solving.

Organisational culture is an important factor in how all stakeholders respond to, and engage with, change. Giles and Bills (2017) propose that educational leaders gain an intimate knowledge of their local school and community context to stimulate cultural change for improved learning outcomes. Professional learning for school

leaders and teachers is a stimulus to change the traditional approach to parent involvement. As parents are members of the school community and a key influence on their child's valuing of learning, and PBL processes were introduced to improve student learning outcomes, it is important to prioritise parent involvement. Strengthening relationships with parents and communicating effectively serve to reinforce the commitment to learning for all stakeholders.

Building relationships, as this study confirmed, is complex. The motivation for parents to become involved, according to McInerney (2008) is multifaceted and dependent on a number of components related to self and outside sources of support. These components are concerned with interventions that support the family, the student and the school (See & Gorard, 2015) in an approach that interconnects aspects that may improve parent involvement in education. The findings of this study showed, that for schools to promote parent involvement, it is imperative that they get to know their parents and the barriers that exist to their involvement in school. This would enable strategies to be developed that reduce these barriers and build parent capacity to cultivate relationships with teachers and become actively involved in school.

If a school interprets and assumes the capacity of parents to attend and participate in school meetings and learning initiatives as a sign of being involved in the education of their children, then this may encourage the "deficit" view held by some teachers about some parents. Teachers understood some of the issues and barriers identified in this study that prevented parents from becoming involved in school. However, negative perceptions of some parents' lack of involvement persisted. Perpetuating these for teachers was their lack of professional learning about parent involvement, and guidelines and procedures to support parent involvement, engagement and participation. Thus, without professional learning and support structures, unknowingly, these two schools accepted parent detachment and withdrawal, rather than delivering a proactive approach to encourage and promote parent participation and involvement.

According to this research study, sharing responsibility with parents as involved decision-makers on school PBL teams is an area for improvement, despite

the success of school-wide PBL to improve student behaviour. Mooney et al., (2008) stated that the PBIS blueprint, on which the Australian model (PBL) was based, does not convey how to support or nurture the parent–school relationships necessary to enable parent involvement in PBL implementation and subsequent processes. Yet such involvement may not only support a cultural change, students' academic and social success but also support the sustainability of PBL into the future. The key findings from this research were generated from investigating the issues around and perspectives to promote and improve parent involvement in PBL and in the schools more widely. These findings, together with relevant literature in the field, informed the examination of aspects that would promote and support parent involvement in schools. This investigation led to the proposal of a new model for schools to improve parent involvement (STIPI) to support the endeavours of PBL and education.

The Significance of the Key Findings

The significance of these findings is highlighted by the chronological references documenting the importance of parent involvement in the social and academic development of children over many decades. A crucial finding from this research is that, although education policies focus on parent involvement and shared responsibility, they are not accompanied by guidelines and strategies to assist schools to effectively establish a learning culture of parent involvement in the education of their children. A supportive and involved parent encourages the establishment and continuation of positive social and learning behaviours. When the child begins school, teachers with parents, share this responsibility for continued social and academic achievement.

Without professional development, school personnel may not have the knowledge or expertise to support equitable parent involvement that makes each parent feel a sense of worth and belonging with regard to school and the education of their children. Therefore, as Epstein (2005b) and others (Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Mytton et al., 2014; Woodrow et al., 2016) have suggested, professional learning is required for teachers, to inform them of the importance of parent involvement to the social well-being and academic performance of children. This understanding would mitigate the traditional and tokenistic approaches to involving parents in school.

A gap emerged between DoE policy statements about the importance of parent involvement in education and policy implementation that affected the capability of teachers (and parents) to fulfil the obligation of a shared responsibility for the education of children. A lack of teacher professional learning and procedural guidelines to initiate change ensured the continuation of tokenistic and traditional approaches to involving parents in the participating schools. Due to the changing nature of the parent population at each school over time, the traditional approaches still in use had unintentionally hindered effective communication and the building of trusted relationships with parents. For education policy to be effectively implemented across schools, the inclusion of guidelines and procedures that ensure best practice strategies are developed and implemented are required to support schools with their approach to the involvement of parents.

Notable inclusions to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (see Chapter three) reflect the findings from this study which identified parent involvement, connections with local services and teacher professional learning as, significant contributors to positive academic and social outcomes for children. A child's sense of self-worth and belonging can be encouraged by teachers, nevertheless, if their parents feel estranged from the school by a lack of self-efficacy, there is a clear disconnect between the home and school. As stated previously, education policies, PBL literature and the teaching standards all acknowledge parents as important contributors to the social and academic performance of children. Therefore, this research, by contributing to our understanding of how to successfully involve parents in school by identifying the means to do so, is a meaningful addition to this field of knowledge.

Future Research Directions

Implementation of the STIPI model at Westlee and Grayson schools would support a plan to encourage parent involvement that would be developed incrementally over future years. The goal would be parent involvement designed for varying levels of commitment, according to each parent's skills and availability. Accurate perception of the needs of teachers and parents with regard to parent involvement, in PBL, and school initiatives generally, requires the collection of

school and parent data specific to the school's context. Analysis of these data would provide a basis for the development of strategies to encourage parents to become involved with school and the education of their children.

Although much has been written regarding best practice strategies for involving parents (Dunst et al., 1994; Epstein, 2013; Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Moore et al., 2016; Poza et al., 2014) the findings from this study showed that some parents hesitate and withdraw from school, unsure how to approach the school to become an involved member of the school community. A pivotal outcome from this research was the proposal of a model for schools to improve parent involvement (STIPI). The model supports schools with getting to know parents, understanding their needs and taking appropriate steps to support or address those needs. Once effective communication and trusted relationships have been developed between all the stakeholders in education, progress can be made toward the goal of involving parents in PBL and other initiatives and school activities.

The findings showed that some teachers sought more knowledge and support, while others were overwhelmed or did not feel that supporting and encouraging parent involvement was part of their job description. Similarly, Stetson et al., (2012) found that teachers felt that more and more tasks were expected of them in addition to the planning, teaching and assessing of curriculum content. These findings demonstrate that while some parents lack the capacity and support to become involved in school, teachers require knowledge and guidelines to develop best practice parent involvement strategies. Thus, professional learning which targets the importance of parent involvement and practical guidelines, such as the STIPI provides, are required to support schools to embrace and promote parent involvement.

The guidelines for the STIPI model include teacher professional learning regarding the importance of parent involvement in the lives and education of children, which align with previous studies' recommendations (Epstein, 2005b) Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Malone, 2015; Woodrow et al., 2016). It may be efficacious to inform parents (through learning-together sessions) of the importance of their relationship with their child and the school, to encourage positive school and life

outcomes. The procedures in the STIPI include the collection of school, family and parent data. These data would form the foundation of a needs-based approach to supporting individual families and parents with the view to building their capacity to become involved in the education of their children and school processes. The structure for support initially focuses on building relationships and responsive communication between teachers and parents, as identified by this study. The outcome is to enable multiple actions to facilitate parent involvement that are appropriate for a specific context. The actions are based on context-specific data linked to services and supports in a particular suburban area. The vision is that the STIPI can be adapted to any school, or community of schools, to support their teachers, parents and families with services, resources or facilities that are individualised to meet their specific needs.

The adoption of the STIPI model has the potential for schools to improve parent involvement through the guided phases of development beginning with teacher professional learning. The process begins with the new cohort of parents of Kindergarten children. This process is repeated each year thereafter to establish the culture of learning together to build the relationships necessary to encourage ongoing parent involvement. Parents who have engaged with the learning-together with teachers process, can, the following year, be advocates for parent involvement to the next parent cohort. The implementation of a systemic approach to parent involvement in school is overdue in Australia. The findings from this study established that the parents from Westlee and Grayson were not involved in PBL planning and implementation and hesitant to engage with teachers and other school activities. This research presents the STIPI model as a practical approach to enabling improved parent involvement in school and PBL practices that augments communication and encourages relationships between teachers and parents.

The contribution of the STIPI model, proposed here, gives an element of freedom to schools to build knowledge and skills incrementally for teachers and parents in a way which encourages collaboration and enables the raising of parent self-efficacy. To build relationships and skills takes time therefore, outcomes will be achieved over the longer term. However, over time, increased parent self-efficacy and involvement may be measurable in terms of the number and frequency of parents

engaged in a variety of school processes when compared to base-line data. There is further research to undertake before parent involvement in PBL can be shown as having a positive influence on student outcomes and the sustainability of the PBL processes. As relationships grow between teachers and parents and parent self-efficacy increases as a result, school PBL teams will have a greater understanding of the resources needed to support better parent involvement in PBL in particular school contexts.

In the future, larger studies could track the progress of parent involvement in PBL and school processes over time to evaluate the effectiveness of the STIPI model. In response to the deficit in parent involvement in PBL identified by this research, the STIPI model is proposed as a framework to improve parent involvement in schools. It remains the aim of a future study to determine the efficacy and usefulness of the STIPI model to design approaches to increase parent involvement in PBL and schools more widely and thus support improved positive social and learning outcomes for students.

To realise the potential of the STIPI model to improve parent involvement, and thus the social and academic performance of students, implementation across different demographic areas and contexts would be required. It is important to understand those factors that are similar for all schools and those that are unique to a particular population. As Monti et al., (2014) suggest, future research must identify the enablers however, while some enablers might be stable for all schools, others might be idiosyncratic to a single school, or a small group of schools. Schools with similar demographics could share expertise and resources, thereby reducing the pressure on each school to develop individual strategies to support a small group of parents. The potential for the STIPI model to establish positive connections between home and school, to promote parent involvement in school processes and activities, remains to be tested with a longitudinal study. A pilot study to implement the model, to test its usefulness for developing efficient procedures and to evaluate its outcomes, would provide important data for the future development of parent involvement guidelines and systems in schools.

The findings from this study focused attention on the needs of parents, from both their perspective and that of the teachers, and on the power inequity in the teacher/parent relationship. Collaboration and stakeholder theories were considered in order to understand this power inequity, and to investigate how parent involvement might be better conceptualised and operationalised in schools. To adequately provide for parent involvement, it is necessary to determine the issues and barriers that exist in the school context by valuing the voices of the stakeholders. The development of best practice parent involvement strategies must be based on a school's knowledge of their current practices within their context.

A consistent approach between home and school would benefit students academically and socially, with less conflict and anxiety across the social systems in which the child and family operate. This research found that the consistency with which PBL processes were implemented in the schools was valued by all the stakeholders. Therefore, improving parent involvement in PBL, and more widely within schools, could offer further opportunity for successful life outcomes for students. The implementation of the STIPI model, developed through the course of this research, may support improved parent involvement. Until we cherish our parents by "getting to know" them to enable their involvement, the academic and social programs in schools, such as PBL, will continue to be disadvantaged by a lack of parental involvement.

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APPENDIX A – EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL RULE MATRIX

RULE / AREA	CLASSROOM	PLAYGROUND	TOILETS	CANTEEN	STAIRS AND WALKWAYS	ASSEMBLY	OFFICE AREA
SAFE	Move sensibly Use equipment appropriately	Wear hats Walk where indicated Play in the right place	Use toilets appropriately Wash hands before leaving	Keep hands and feet to yourself Buy and leave	Keep to the left Hands and feet to yourself	Move sensibly to your area	Move sensibly Go to the front desk
RESPECTFUL	Be polite Follow teacher instructions	Be polite Listen to teachers Put rubbish in the bin	Be polite Respect privacy Care for toilet facilities	Be polite Wait your turn	Be polite Follow teacher instructions	Be polite Listen quietly Respond appropriately	Be polite Wait your turn
LEARNER	Be prepared Listen with your whole body Try your best	Play by the rules Set an example for others	Remember personal hygiene	Be prepared to buy Check your change	Set an example for others	Appreciate others' talents	Know what to say or ask Listen to instructions

APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT INVITATIONS AND CONSENT

LETTER

Educational Excellence and Equity (E3) Research Program
Centre for Educational Research
University of Western Sydney
Bankstown Campus
Locked bag 1797, Penrith
NSW 2751

Date

Dear Principal,

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

We seek your permission for you as Principal and the teachers, students and parents of your school community to participate in a research project conducted by researchers from the University of Western Sydney. The purpose of the study is to find out what teachers, students and parents know about Positive Behaviour for Learning. The information provided by the participants will help shape interventions and supports for your school community in the future. Participation would involve staff and parent participation in a 20–30 minute interview, with students interviewed in a focus group situation. More details about the research are outlined on the next page.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Rhonda Craven
Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW 2751, Australia.
Telephone: 02 9772 6557; Fax: 02 9772 6193; Email: r.craven@uws.edu.au

CONSENT FORM

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

As Principal I give consent to the participation of [name of school] in the research project undertaken by:

Professor Rhonda Craven, 9772 6557, r.craven@uws.edu.au
Associate Professor Alex Yeung 9772 6557, a.yeung@uws.edu.au
Dr Mary Mooney 4736 0325, m.mooney@uws.edu.au
Michelle Rose 0416 044 214, 17101439@uws.edu.au

I acknowledge that:

- I have read the information sheet for this study.
- I have discussed participation with my staff.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary for all participants and that withdrawal at any time is permitted without any adverse consequence.
- I understand that involvement is strictly confidential and that no information will be used in any way that reveals the identity of any participant or the school.
- I understand that participation in this study will involve interviews for myself, and teachers, students and parents who wish to participate, and that the interviews will take about 20-30 minutes.
- I understand that participation for students will involve being interviewed in a group situation which will take about 20-30 minutes.
- I understand that the school will provide documentation relevant to the study and that this will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will not be identified in any written reports.
- I understand that the researcher will need access to a suitable space in which to conduct the interviews with minimal disruption to the school day and I am willing to support this in the interest of further understanding our school community.

Name of Principal _____ **(please print)**

Principal's signature _____ **Date**_____

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

Additional Information Sheet

Aim

The aim of this study is to find out teachers, students and parents understandings about:

- The effectiveness of school programs promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning. And
- How parents can help promote Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Participation

Adult participation will involve taking part in a 20–30 minute taped interview with a trained researcher at a time which is the least inconvenient to the participant and the school. The input from participants will provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing work in this area to support whole school communities deliver better outcomes for students and their families in promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Nature of Participation

Your assistance in this study is voluntary. There will be no adverse consequences should you choose not to assist. Participants may withdraw their involvement in the study at any time.

Information provided in this study by individuals will not be given to others. However, researchers are required by the Department of Education and Communities to ensure that *"when studies have the potential to identify students as being at risk of harm from themselves or others, then the names of such students will need to be disclosed to the relevant school principal(s) to enable further action to be taken as may be appropriate (Refer also Section 4.1.2.). The Department acknowledges that this requirement may jeopardise confidentiality and may present methodological problems. In such situations, however, it considers its 'duty of care' obligations to be paramount*" (NSW Department of Education and Training, State Education Research Approval Process, Guidelines for Approving Applications from External Agencies to Conduct Research in NSW Government Schools, 2006, p. 14). Students will be advised that should they feel distressed as a result of participation they can meet with the school counsellor. Should any adult feel distressed as a result of participation, advice can be sought from an appropriately qualified counsellor.

Results

Results in research reports will be reported in group form, without identifying individuals or schools. The data will be kept in a locked file, accessible only to the university researchers in this study, although the unidentified data may be further analysed by other university researchers. The results of the study will be reported back to your school.

Researchers

This research is being conducted by:

- Professor Rhonda Craven, University of Western Sydney (02 97726557, r.craven@uws.edu.au);
- Associate Professor Alexander Yeung, University of Western Sydney (02 9772 6264, a.yeung@uws.edu.au);
- Dr Mary Mooney, University of Western Sydney (02 47360325, m.mooney@uws.edu.au); and
- Michelle Rose, Department of Education and Communities (02 9826 9018) 17101439@uws.edu.au (PhD student undertaking this research as her PhD degree).

Please contact the researchers if you require any further information.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval no. H9331***)***. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 47 360 883). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and

LETTER

Educational Excellence and Equity (E3) Research Program
Centre for Educational Research
University of Western Sydney
Bankstown Campus
Locked bag 1797, Penrith
NSW 2751

Date

Dear Teachers,

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

We wish to invite you to be involved in a research project conducted by the University of Western Sydney. The purpose of the project is to find out what parents, teachers and students understand about Positive Behaviour for Learning. The information you provide will help to shape interventions and supports for students and their families in the future. Your participation would involve participating in a 20–30 minute interview with a trained research assistant. More details about the research are outlined on the next page. If you are willing to participate in this research, please fill out the consent form and return it to the Principal.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Rhonda Craven
Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW 2751, Australia.
Telephone: 02 9772 6557; Fax: 02 9772 6193; Email: r.craven@uws.edu.au

CONSENT FORM

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

I acknowledge that I have read the "Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning Additional Information Sheet".

As a teacher at _____ [name of school] I give my consent to participate in the research project undertaken by:

- Professor Rhonda Craven, 9772 6557, r.craven@uws.edu.au
- Associate Professor Alex Yeung 9772 6557, a.yeung@uws.edu.au
- Dr Mary Mooney 4736 0325, m.mooney@uws.edu.au
- Michelle Rose 0416 044 214, 17101439@uws.edu.au

I acknowledge that:

- I have read the information sheet for this study.
- I have discussed participation with my Principal.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary for all participants and that withdrawal at any time is permitted without any adverse consequence.
- I understand that involvement is strictly confidential and that no information will be used in any way that reveals the identity of any participant or the school.
- I understand that participation in this study will involve an interview and that the interview will take about 20-30 minutes.

Name of Teacher _____ **(please print)**

Teacher's signature _____ **Date**_____

Please fax to Michelle Rose (Fax: 02 9826 8209) or return to the Principal.

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

Additional Information Sheet

Aim

The aim of this study is to find out teachers, students and parents understandings about:

- The effectiveness of school programs promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning. And
- How parents can help promote Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Participation

Your participation would involve participating in a 20–30 minute interview with a research assistant. Your input will provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing work in this area to support whole school communities deliver better outcomes for students and their families in promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Nature of Participation

Your assistance in this study is voluntary. There will be no adverse consequences should you choose not to assist. You may also withdraw your involvement in the study at any time. Information provided in this study by individuals will not be given to others. However, researchers are required by the Department of Education and Communities to ensure that *"when studies have the potential to identify students as being at risk of harm from themselves or others, then the names of such students will need to be disclosed to the relevant school principal(s) to enable further action to be taken as may be appropriate (Refer also Section 4.1.2.). The Department acknowledges that this requirement may jeopardise confidentiality and may present methodological problems. In such situations, however, it considers its 'duty of care' obligations to be paramount*" (NSW Department of Education and Training, State Education Research Approval Process, Guidelines for Approving Applications from External Agencies to Conduct Research in NSW Government Schools, 2006, p. 14). Students will be advised that should they feel distressed as a result of participation they can meet with the school counsellor. Should any parent or teacher feel distressed as a result of participation, advice can be sought from an appropriately qualified counsellor.

Results

Results in research reports will be reported in group form, without identifying individuals or schools. The data will be kept in a locked file, accessible only to the university researchers in this study, although the unidentified data may be further analysed by other university researchers. The results of the study will be reported back to your school.

Researchers

This research is being conducted by:

- Professor Rhonda Craven, University of Western Sydney (02 97726557, r.craven@uws.edu.au);
- Associate Professor Alexander Yeung, University of Western Sydney (02 97726264, a.yeung@uws.edu.au);
- Dr Mary Mooney, University of Western Sydney (02 47360325, m.moooney@uws.edu.au); and
- Michelle Rose, Department of Education and Communities (9826 9018), 17101439@uws.edu.au (PhD student undertaking this research as her PhD degree).

LETTER

Educational Excellence and Equity (E3) Research Program
Centre for Educational Research
University of Western Sydney
Bankstown Campus
Locked bag 1797, Penrith
NSW 2751

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

We seek permission for your child and yourself, if you are available, to take part in the above research project conducted by researchers from the University of Western Sydney. The purpose of the project is to find out what parents, teachers and students understand about Positive Behaviour for Learning. The information you and your child provide will help to shape interventions and supports for students and their families in the future. Your participation would involve participating in a 20–30 minute interview either by phone or in person with a research assistant and your child's participation in a 20–30 minute group discussion. More details about the research are outlined on the next page. If you are willing for yourself and your child to participate in this research, please fill out the consent form below, tear it off, and return it to your child's teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Rhonda Craven
Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW 2751, Australia.
Telephone: 02 9772 6557; Fax: 02 9772 6193; Email: r.craven@uws.edu.au

CONSENT FORM

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

I acknowledge that I have read the "Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning additional information sheet" and that I have discussed the project with my child. I give consent for the participation of my child in an interview for the above research project and consent to participate in an interview. I would like to be interviewed (***please tick one***):

□ **By telephone please contact me on: _____**

□ **At school in person. Please ring me on _____to arrange a time.**

□ **At school in a group. Please ring me on _____to confirm a time.**

I am aware that, according to the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) procedures, researchers are required to inform the Principal if my child is identified as being at risk of harm from him/herself or others during participation in this research project and give consent for the researchers to notify the Principal of this.

Parent/Guardian Name (please print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Your Child's name (family name) _____ (first name) _____

Your child's class _____

Please return to your child's teacher.

Developing School-Wide Change Through Positive Behaviour for Learning

Additional Information Sheet

Aim

The aim of this study is to find out teachers, students and parents understandings about:

- The effectiveness of school programs promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning. And
- How parents can help promote Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Participation

Your participation would involve participating in a 20–30 minute interview either by phone or in person at a time and place deemed suitable by you with a research assistant. Your input will provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing work in this area to support whole school communities deliver better outcomes for students and their families in promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning.

Nature of Participation

Your assistance in this study, and your child's, is voluntary. There will be no adverse consequences should you or your child choose not to assist. You may also withdraw your or your child's involvement in the study at any time. Information provided in this study by individuals will not be given to others. However, researchers are required by the Department of Education and Communities to ensure that *"when studies have the potential to identify students as being at risk of harm from themselves or others, then the names of such students will need to be disclosed to the relevant school principal(s) to enable further action to be taken as may be appropriate (Refer also Section 4.1.2.). The Department acknowledges that this requirement may jeopardise confidentiality and may present methodological problems. In such situations, however, it considers its 'duty of care' obligations to be paramount*" (NSW Department of Education and Training, State Education Research Approval Process, Guidelines for Approving Applications from External Agencies to Conduct Research in NSW Government Schools, 2006, p. 14). Students will be advised that should they feel distressed as a result of participation they can meet with the school counsellor. Should any parent feel distressed as a result of participation, advice can be sought from an appropriately qualified counsellor.

Results

Results in research reports will be reported in group form, without identifying individuals or schools. The data will be kept in a locked file, accessible only to the university researchers in this study, although the unidentified data may be further analysed by other university researchers. The results of the study will be reported back to your school.

Researchers

This research is being conducted by:

- Professor Rhonda Craven, University of Western Sydney (02 97726557, r.craven@uws.edu.au);
- Associate Professor Alexander Yeung, University of Western Sydney (02 97726264, a.yeung@uws.edu.au);
- Dr Mary Mooney, University of Western Sydney (02 47360325, m.moooney@uws.edu.au); and
- Michelle Rose, Department of Education and Communities (9826 9018), 17101439@uws.edu.au (PhD student undertaking this research as her PhD degree).

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval no. H9331***)***. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 47 360 883). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TEACHER QUESTIONS

1). Why was PBL or PBIS introduced to your school?

2). Describe how parents were involved in the implementation process?

3). Small group and individual interventions are structured for the students at the top of the PBL / PBIS triangle: What are your thoughts about parent involvement in these types of intervention programs?

4.) If parents were involved in such interventions, what information or support might they need to effectively engage in the process?

5). Some examples of community services and resources have been supplied. Describe the services and resources that you consider to be important to support the needs of families at this school?

PARENT QUESTIONS

1). What do you know about PBL or PBIS at your school?

2). Were you asked to contribute your ideas?

3). Could you give me your thoughts about having consistent rules, rewards and consequences for children both at school and at home?

4.) How do you as a parent support these rules and consequences?

5). Life can be very busy and stressful at times and we all seek advice or support about things sometimes [tutoring, health problems, child behaviour, child care and many others]. Can you tell me if it would be very helpful if the school was a contact for services that could support family needs as well as your child's learning?

6). How could more support be set up for families within schools?

7). What would stop you from asking for help or support from your school?

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS

1). Why did you take up the opportunity to implement PBL / PBIS into this school?

2). How were parents involved in the implementation process?

3). Small group and individual interventions and supports are structured for the students at the top of the PBL / PBIS triangle: What are your thoughts about parent involvement in these types of specific intervention programs?

4.) If parents were involved in such interventions, what information or support might they need to effectively engage in the process?

5). Some examples of community services and resources have been supplied. Describe the services and resources that you consider to be important to support the needs of families at this school?

6). In your opinion how could the resources and services that you have described be more available or accessible to the families here?

STUDENT QUESTIONS

1). Can you tell me what the school rules are?

2). How do these rules help you at school?

3). What difference do these rules make in your classroom?

4.) Do your parents agree with these rules?

5). How do your parents feel about what happens if you follow the rules or if you break the rules?

6). Can you tell me what kind of rules you have at home?

7). How are school rules and home rules the same or different?

I'm thinking of things that might worry your parents, like, helping with your homework, getting you to school on time, who can help if they are sick, who to ask if they need something: so I'm wondering:

8). How could your school be more helpful to your family?